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The kingdom of nature : God's providential care the nonhuman creation.

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THE KINGDOM OF NATURE:
God's Providential Care for
the Nonhuman Creation

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(University of London)

1989

King's College (KQC) London

ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a systematic theological response to the environmentalist critique of Christian attitudes to the natural world. Various occasional responses and a number of historical studies have already demonstrated that this critique is inaccurate in its portrayal of Christianity as uniformly hostile to the environment. However, they also show that those Christian traditions most closely associated with the development of western science and technology exhibit a deep-seated ambivalence towards matter and the natural world.

In the thesis I relate this ambivalence to the western post-Nicene development of the doctrine of the Trinity and its impact on the doctrines of creation and providence. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 trace the relationship between these doctrines and their effect on attitudes to the nonhuman creation in the writings of Augustine, Bonaventure, Calvin, Tillich, and Barth.

Chapter 5 re-examines several biblical texts which have been of central importance in the development of the Christian doctrine of creation. I reject Lynn White's thesis that hostility to nature is an integral part of these texts. I also question the thesis that creation faith is always subordinate to soteriology. The chapter emphasises a

number of ways in which the biblical texts offer a positive view of the nonhuman creation.

In the final chapter I begin to develop a positive theology of nature within the Reformed dogmatic locus of providence. The resources I use include some of the positive elements discerned in the preceding historical study, a re-examination of certain key biblical texts, and a modern interpretation of the eastern doctrine of the Trinity. I conclude that the nonhuman creation has a proper and lasting place within the divine economy. This is not to deny the centrality of humankind but to argue that this centrality must be interpreted in terms of priesthood, responsibility, and service rather than domination.

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CHAPTER 1
THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS
AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

1. THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS AND WESTERN ATTITUDES TO
NATURE

The past thirty years have seen a dramatic awakening of human consciousness to the rapid deterioration of our environment as a result of human activities. The major immediate causal factors appear to be exploitative or inappropriate agricultural and forestry practices, resulting in an accelerating loss of natural habitats and the desertification of marginal agricultural land. Further destruction of ecosystems is occurring as a result of urbanisation and industrial pollution¹. These immediate causes have, in turn, been traced back to the exponential growth in human population and the nature of current global economic structures².

However, environmentalists have not been content to restrict their search for causes of the environmental crisis to the above factors. They pursue their search for its roots beyond the immediately visible aspects of human behaviour into the realms of human belief systems and intellectual constructions. William Blackstone summarises

the attitudes and values held to be responsible for the crisis as follows:

the basic underlying causes ... are mistaken values and attitudes--the attitudes that we can exploit the environment without restrictions, that the production of goods is more important than the people who use them, that nature will provide unlimited resources, that we have no obligation to future generations to conserve resources, that continued increase in human population is desirable and that the right to have as many children as one wants is an inviolable right, that the answer to the problems of technology is more technology, and that gross differences and inequities in the distribution of goods and services are quite acceptable. (Blackstone 1974, 16)

In general, three widely held beliefs are regarded as significant causal factors underlying the present situation: the right to exploit nature (whether to benefit humankind as a whole, a particular nation, or social class, or corporate grouping, or individual); the acceptance (or positive approval) of population growth; and, belief in the progress of human society towards a specific (but variously defined) goal. To this list is sometimes added a concern for posterity (e.g., Black 1970, 21-22, 109-24).

In the light of recent developments in philosophy, it is noteworthy that Blackstone and the vast majority of environmentalists simply assume that thought is prior to behaviour: that specific beliefs and intellectual positions may be regarded as causing specific types of behaviour. Only a small minority is prepared to argue that the search for intellectual or spiritual roots of the crisis is fundamentally misguided. For Marxist environmentalists (e.g., Leiss 1972) human activity is both logically and temporally prior to reflection on that activity. Thus the

Biblical injunction to be fruitful and multiply is no more than a rationalisation of what is, in fact, the case given a particular set of social and economic structures.

This divergence over the relationship between thought and action is, of course, a dynamic analogue of the longstanding philosophical debate about the relationship between mind and body. The dominant view recalls the Cartesian dualism (and other forms of idealism) which have dominated western thought in recent centuries. Its polar opposite is clearly reminiscent of dialectical materialism and epiphenomenalism. Since both extremes have been subjected to severe criticism, I will content myself with noting a strong correlation between particular patterns of human behaviour and particular belief systems. Rather than insisting that one is consistently the cause of the other, I prefer to treat them as mutually determinative: human actions are often the expression of mental processes but, conversely, those same mental processes are continually open to modification to provide rationalisations of human actions. Thus in the case of the environmental crisis it is not a mistake to seek intellectual causes (cf. Alves 1985, xxxiii). However, we must beware of oversimplified explanations.

2. CHRISTIANITY AS A ROOT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS?

From the insistence that the crisis has its roots in the attitudes and values of Western society it is but a short step to seeing it as a spiritual crisis. Since the Judaeo-Christian traditions have played a formative role in our society, it is not surprising to find widespread criticism of them in environmentalist literature³.

Although not the most carefully nuanced of arguments, Lynn White's case against the Latin strand of the Judaeo-Christian tradition is widely accepted as representative of environmentalist critiques of Christianity. Having laid the blame for our present environmental problems squarely at the door of western science and technology, he asks about the world view that encouraged this development. Given the widespread belief that science as we know it could not have evolved without the particular presuppositions of the Christian doctrine of creation⁴, it is not surprising that he should look critically at the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures as interpreted by western Christianity.

In particular he singles out for criticism the concepts of dominium terrae and imago dei. The former leads to an understanding of nature as a human utility: its sole purpose is to minister to our physical needs. "God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes" (White 1967, 1205). The latter sets man apart from nature, presenting him as a demigod manipulating

passive matter:

Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends. (White 1967, 1205).

In White's view, the combined effect of these concepts, is to make Christianity "the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen" (White 1967, 1205). Furthermore, he suggests that the historical nature of the Judaeo-Christian revelation, with its linear view of time, has contributed to the appearance of doctrines of human progress in Western society.

On this analysis, antipathy to the natural world is implicit in the very foundations of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. However, White allows that, "The implications of Christianity for the conquest of nature would emerge more easily in the Western atmosphere" (White 1967, 1206). Furthermore he recognises within the more obviously anti-ecological Western tradition the presence of a positive strand of thought with respect to nature, personified by St Francis of Assisi. He credits St Francis with recognising that "all things are fellow creatures praising God in their own ways, as men do in theirs" (White 1968, 100). For this reason he proposes St Francis as "a patron saint for ecologists" (White 1967, 1207) while asserting that his views were strictly "heretical."⁵

More recently White has moderated his argument. Thus, "All that can be said ... is that Christianity in its Latin

form ... provided a set of presuppositions remarkably favourable to technological thrust" (White 1973, 58).

Not surprisingly his original accusations elicited considerable response from Christian theologians. Several defensive responses may be discerned in these writings. Of these, the most popular has been to question his historical arguments⁶. For example, it is frequently pointed out that considerable ecological damage has been done by non-Christian cultures⁷. This approach seeks to undermine his charges by showing that Christianity does not bear sole responsibility. Thus Arthur Peacocke asserts that,

to substantiate White's hypothesis ... it would be necessary to show that men in the 'Judaean-Christian tradition' have uniquely generated the eco-disasters of our planet; that an exploitative view of nature was actually and generally held in that tradition; and that this tradition actually does involve such an exploitative view. (Peacocke 1979, 276)

But to argue in this vein is to miss the real strength of White's argument. As he says himself, "No sensible person could maintain that all ecologic damage is, or has been, rooted in religious attitudes" (White 1973, 57). It is illuminating to compare his thesis with Max Weber's correlation of The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. Like White, Weber is often regarded as having postulated a causal relationship between a body of religious beliefs and a particular cluster of socio-economic behaviours. And the arguments against Weber so understood have been used against White. However, Rubem Alves has pointed out that

Weber's analysis does not purport to establish a causal relationship between the spirit of Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism. It claims, rather, to establish the functional relationship of the former to the latter. In other words, the Protestant spirit is structurally similar to the spirit of capitalism; hence it is adapted to the latter and suited to its expansion. (Alves 1985, 15).

Seen in this light, the moderate version of White's case suggests a corresponding functional relationship between Christian teaching with regard to nature and the exploitative practices of significant sections of western society. Thus it is not enough to offer historical counter-examples. Western Christianity still stands accused of being peculiarly adapted to permit the growth of exploitative technologies and economic structures. An adequate response to this charge must involve a careful historical examination of the attitudes to nature adopted by the western Christian traditions.

Santmyre 1985 offers an outline of such an analysis. In summary, the results of his research suggest that there is a deep-rooted ambivalence towards nature in the Latin (and hence also Protestant) theological and spiritual traditions. He discerns two competing motifs within the tradition: the spiritual (representing an anti-ecological flight from creation towards a God conceived of as transcendent Spirit) and the ecological. The dominant view of Western Christianity may be regarded as the product of an attempt to resolve this ambivalence by suppressing the latter motif. Like White (and the majority of religious environmentalists), he envisages the development of an adequate theology of nature as involving the suppression of

the former motif. Furthermore, his analysis suggests that certain key figures in the history of western theology and spirituality have achieved that suppression. Thus he sees both Augustine and St Francis as paradigms for would-be theologians of nature (Santmire 1985, 55-73; 106-19). The apparent triumph of the ecological motif in these cases is made the more remarkable by the fact that Santmire finds the opposing spiritual motif even in the pages of the New Testament (Santmire 1985, 210-15).

3. THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGY OF NATURE

(a) Theological and religious implications of environmentalism:

Quite apart from the question of direct or indirect culpability, the nature of the issues raised by the ecological crisis suggests that Christian theology could play a positive role in the associated intellectual debate. There is wide agreement amongst environmentalists that what is needed is not a technological response but rather a transformation in our attitudes towards nature; if you like, a repentance. Typical is Eugene Odum's comment that,

Science can define reasonable levels and limits of growth and energy usage that are optimum for the quality of human existence, but ethics coupled with the legal and economic expedencies that derive from ethical behaviour are absolutely necessary if we are to make the orderly transition to maturity. (Odum 1974, 15)

In the face of such demands for prescriptive answers

(for an environmental ethic) our technocentric Western culture is impotent. Its continuing emphasis on description as the basis for control and manipulation is dangerously conservative (i.e., it tends to regard the results of scientific description as, somehow, normative). Such canonisation of the status quo makes it difficult for society to change direction even when it is widely recognised that such change is necessary. The lack of any convincing or authoritative guidance is clearly visible in the lack of agreement over what would constitute an acceptable (or even a viable) environmental ethic⁸.

The widespread demands for an appropriate environmental ethic present theologians with an opportunity to re-examine and further develop their own creation ethics. At the same time, since an ethical system cannot be developed in a vacuum, there is a clear need for further work to be done on an appropriate ontology and philosophical anthropology.

Human capacity (perhaps fatally) to damage our natural environment also raises several important questions for theology. For instance John Black says of contemporary humankind that,

Dominion over his environment has proceeded so far as to encourage man to arrogate to himself the role of its creator. If Christianity will be shown in the end to have failed the world, it will have failed because it encouraged man to set himself apart from nature, or, at the very least, because it failed to discourage him from doing this ... The end result of dissociating himself from the rest of nature has been to dissociate himself also from the belief in a divine creator. (Black 1970, 121).

In what sense has twentieth century man come of age?

Do the realities of the ecological crisis and the threat of nuclear war imply that modern man has indeed wrested from God the capacity to govern and perhaps to destroy his creation? Clearly the present situation calls for a re-examination of theological anthropology. Equally clear is the need for an examination of the questions this raises about divine sovereignty and God's activity of governing the natural world.

One may also see the ecological crisis as requiring a revision of our approaches to spirituality and worship in the light of a revised understanding of the place of the natural order in the divine will. The connection between our attitude to nature and our approach to spirituality appears very clearly in Santmire's analysis. In particular, the spiritual motif which has formed such an important part of the Western Christian traditions, and which Santmire argues has contributed to the present crisis, is seen to be at the very foundation of Western spirituality⁹. As Donald Nicholl has commented,

there is an intimate connection between the picture which human beings hold of their position in the cosmos and the sort of wholeness or holiness which they regard as feasible for human beings. If there is no such harmonious connection between a person's image of his own position and his image of the cosmos in which he lives but, on the contrary, a jarring discord between them, then all his efforts to achieve wholeness and holiness will be frustrated from the beginning. (Nicholl 1981, 15).

If so, the jarring discord between a creation which God has declared to be very good in its own right and the apparent acquiescence of Christian theology in the face of its wanton

destruction by humankind must be a cause for concern.

As regards the relationship between our attitude to nature and worship, Hardy and Ford point out that,

Most praise is of God in interaction with the world. He is praised for his creation, his acts, his words, his loving presence and involvement. If the credibility of this interaction is weakened then the very nerve of praise is numbed. (Hardy & Ford 1984, 60)

This is precisely what happens when Christianity is silent in the face of the exploitation of nature. In granting humanity absolute power over creation, it denies the sovereignty of God and undermines the credibility of his interaction with his creation. Alternatively, one may say that one's understanding of God's interaction with the world critically affects one's views about what constitutes an appropriate form of praise. It is significant that those Christian traditions which have maintained a positive attitude to the material creation in their theologies have done so also in their forms of worship.

(b) The dogmatic necessity

It is arguable that without the stimulus of the environmental crisis Christian teaching with respect to the natural world would have remained largely unexamined. However, once given that external stimulus, several theological factors come into play which necessitate closer attention to nature.

(i) Silence with respect to nature: The single most important such pressure is simply the consciousness of an embarrassing silence regarding nature. Pressure for

revision of Christian attitudes to the natural world has made theologians aware that the various Christian theological traditions have remarkably little to say about the nonhuman dimensions of creation.

Contrary to the opinion of some recent schools of theology, there is a longstanding tradition that the concerns of theology are not confined solely to the relationship between God and man. On the contrary, even Albrecht Ritschl could write that "Three points are necessary to determine the circle by which a religion is completely represented--God, man and the world" (Ritschl 1902, 29). He even went on to complain about the neglect of the third point by German theology after Schleiermacher (Ritschl 1902, 587)¹⁰. More recently T. F. Torrance has insisted that

since theology has to do not simply with God/man relations but with God/man/world or God/world/man relations, an understanding of the world inevitably enters into the coefficients of theological concepts and statements. (Torrance 1980, 75)

Environmentalism has pointed out that, in spite of this tradition of including the world within the circle of theological concerns, theologians of all traditions have been singularly poor at doing so. In recent years, the inability of theologians to find a positive place for the nonhuman creation has been commented on from a variety of perspectives. Two of these comments are worth noting at this point.

From the perspective of divine action in the world, Langdon Gilkey has pointed out the inability of contemporary

theology to accommodate a doctrine of providence (Gilkey 1963; Gilkey 1976, 188-238). Since this doctrine treats God's continuing relation to the world, its marginalisation must render problematic any effort to expound a theology of nature in terms of any of the theologies criticised by Gilkey¹¹.

A similar observation is made by Hendrikus Berkhof from the perspective of the relationship of Christian faith and hope to this world. He questions the tendency of Christian theology to detach faith and hope from its context in our biophysical existence, and asserts that "Christian conceptions of creation, of renewal, and of consummation are bound to remain abstract, unless the world is included in the consideration" where world is understood as "the totality of the contexts and structures within which human existence takes place" (Berkhof 1979, 499). However, Berkhof is himself by no means entirely free from the tendency to undervalue the nonhuman context of human existence. This is clearly illustrated by the serious consideration he gives to the possibility of using society or culture as synonyms for world (and the reasons he gives for rejecting them). (Berkhof 1979, 499-501).

As has been pointed out by Karl Barth, the existence of such silences in systematic theology clearly indicates the need for theologians to attend to unspoken presuppositions and to ensure that they are, in fact, in accordance with Scripture. In his own words,

In theology we must always be suspicious when questions are left open and problems evaded, for in practice it means that they are linked with certain necessary answers which because they are casual and unregulated may well be completely false. It is in those situations where we can proceed only by surreptitiously leaving questions unanswered that we easily find ourselves in deep water in our theological thinking and utterance. (CD III/3, 140)

But this internal pressure to avoid silences within theology is not merely negative. Pannenberg puts it in a positive light by considering the nature of the God of the Christian revelation. Since God is the creator of all things, "the task of theology goes beyond its special theme and includes all truth whatever" (Pannenberg 1970, 1)¹². It follows that,

A theology that remains conscious of the intellectual obligation that goes along with the use of the word "God" will try in every possible way to relate all truth, and therefore not least of all the knowledge of the extra-theological sciences, to the God of the Bible, and to attain a new understanding of everything by viewing it in the light of this God. That task might seem presumptuous, but it is the non-transferable burden laid upon any responsible speech about God. (Pannenberg 1970, 2)

(ii) Nature and communion: Another factor which demands that we re-examine the theological significance of the nonhuman creation is the personalism of many contemporary theologians.

This is closely associated with the recent dramatic revival of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity. Recognition of its fundamental place in Christian doctrine has led to the creation of dynamic trinitarian ontologies. In the context of such ontologies, created being is seen in terms of participation, communion, or relatedness. Such an approach lends itself to a the-anthropocentric neglect of

the nonhuman unless it takes pains to work out the meaning of an ontology of communion for non-personal being. By their very nature, such theologies take up the challenge of Martin Buber's insistence that I-Thou relationships extend to the nonhuman (e.g., Buber 1970, 57-58).

The theology which most clearly demonstrates the dangers of failing to do so is that of Karl Barth. In spite of having written more than two thousand words on the subject, he is often accused of failing to take creation seriously. Of course, his clearly stated reluctance to tackle this doctrine (CD III/1, ix) was partly responsible for attracting such criticism. However, as we shall see later, there is in his doctrine of creation such a strong emphasis on man as the paradigmatic creature and on Jesus Christ as the paradigmatic man as to raise serious suspicions in the minds of those whose concern is to articulate a theology of nature¹³.

(iii) The linguistic necessity: In addition to the above, a third theological factor may be mentioned. Theological language, indeed all language, is shot through with metaphors drawn from the world of nature. The free use of such metaphors by the biblical authors is sometimes dismissed as merely metaphorical: the implication being that such language is nothing more than poetic embellishment. However, an approach to theological language that takes metaphor seriously cannot ignore the fact that human communications are embedded in the nonhuman. It is simply incongruous for theology to be so dependent on something it

neglects or affects to despise.

(c) The polemical necessity

Environmentalism, particularly in its more aggressive religiously motivated forms, has suggested that Christianity is incorrigibly out of step with some of the most deeply held beliefs of contemporary culture. One of the tasks of theology is the defensive one of responding to such criticisms. Since the self-understanding of the Christian community is expressed in terms it shares with its cultural context, the theologian cannot take for granted that the conventional wisdom of the church is an accurate interpretation of the Christian revelation. Secular criticisms may highlight either the points at which the Gospel scandalises the world or points at which the church has accommodated the Gospel to a now obsolete secular world view.

Hendrikus Berkhof points out three important challenges to the aforementioned theological silence with respect to the world (Berkhof 1979, 505-07). As he points out, they have already had a major influence on the way in which the social world of man has been integrated into contemporary theology.

The first was the appearance of a secularism which accuses Christianity of regarding this world as irrelevant to, or, at best, merely instrumental in the achievement of God's purposes. Closely related to this is the second challenge: the dialectical materialism of Marxism. Its

effect has been to recall our attention to "how much of an alienating effect the structures of our world can have with respect to the quality of human life as desired by God" (Berkhof 1979, 505). Thus, in a negative sense, it stresses the embeddedness of human life in the structures of this world. The third of Berkhof's perceived challenges is that of evolutionary thought and the dynamic view of the natural world which has accompanied it. In the light of this new dynamism, the static understanding of the world favoured by the older orthodoxy becomes highly suspect. Berkhof suggests that it "involves a challenge to theologians to broaden the belief in man's changeability (sanctification) so that it includes the sanctification of the world as well" (Berkhof 1979, 506).

In addition to these pressures on us not to maintain our silence with respect to the natural world, it is important to be aware of further pressures exerted by our contemporary scientific understanding of the world. The twentieth century has seen a radical transformation in the way we understand the world both in the physical sciences and the biological sciences. For example, the combined effect of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity and the more recent development of Quantum Mechanics has been to undermine the older view of the physical world as a deterministic mechanism¹⁴. Quite apart from the awareness of the interconnectedness of things created by developments in ecology, such changes in scientific outlook demand a re-examination of Christian traditions with respect to the

natural world.

4. FACTORS WORKING AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT OF A THEOLOGY OF NATURE

However, in spite of the pressures cited above, there are a number of emphases in recent theology which actively hinder the development of a theology of nature. Within twentieth century protestant theology four, in particular, stand out¹⁵. Because of its association with the tradition of doing natural theology, theological attention to nature is widely regarded as a threat to the Christian revelation. Even if the difference between natural theology and theology of nature is recognised, it is still suggested that the concept of nature carries with it alien philosophical connotations which constitute a threat to any theology which engages with the concept. A particularly influential form of this objection is to be found in twentieth century existential approaches to theology. Theologians such as Bultmann call into question the objectification they see in such attempts to grapple with the nonhuman dimensions of the world. Finally, even theologians who would not be averse to theologies of nature on other grounds counsel caution because of the mystery of nature revealed by modern science. Some go so far as to commend the view that theology should remain agnostic with regard to the world of science. In brief, it has been

suggested by a wide variety of theologians that such attention to the nonhuman is either inappropriate or impossible within theology.

(a) Natural theology:

In western Christianity, the traditional loci of theological attention to the natural world were natural theology and the hexaemeral literature (exegetical or dogmatic accounts of the divine creative activity). Since the Enlightenment, both loci have been lost. The former has been subjected to a variety of philosophical and (more recently) theological criticisms while the latter has been dismembered by a combination of biblical criticism and modern scientific cosmogonies. Not surprisingly, the assault on natural theology has been seen as a key factor in inhibiting the development of a theology of nature (Macquarrie 1975, 69). Those who question the legitimacy of natural theology are widely seen as wishing to eliminate nature from the sphere of theology¹⁶.

Thus an examination of the criticisms of natural theology and the counter-claims of contemporary natural theologians will help us to define more clearly the boundaries of a legitimate theology of nature.

(i) What is natural theology? Natural theology has been defined in a variety of ways (Avis 1984) with the result there is considerable disagreement over precisely what it was trying to achieve. There is less disagreement over its content: it embraced all natural knowledge of God,

the human soul and natural law (Macquarrie 1977, 45). Since it is the Barthian approach which is seen to create difficulties for would-be theologians of nature we would do well to examine just what Barth was objecting to. In the first of his 1937 Gifford Lectures, he defined it thus:

a science of God, of the relations in which the world stands to Him and of the human ethics and morality resulting from the knowledge of Him. This science is to be constructed independently of all historical religions and religious bodies as a strict natural science like chemistry and astronomy "without reference to or reliance upon any supposed special exceptional or so-called miraculous revelation." (Barth 1938, 3)

It is clear from this definition that what Barth has in mind is not so much a particular content (e.g., the theistic arguments for the existence of God) as a method. Natural theology is seen as offering a rational and empirical foundation for revealed theology. Its contemporary advocates see this as an essential link between reason and faith (Macquarrie 1977, 44). Without it, so it is argued, there can be no point of contact between secular and theological discourse. Thus apologetics becomes impossible and theology unintelligible.

(ii) Objections to natural theology: The Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophical critiques of natural theology have been enormously influential. Hume, Kant, and, more recently, Nietzsche and Camus have changed the face of natural theology and the philosophy of religion. However, if their intention was to debunk natural theology their efforts have been strikingly unsuccessful. Even Darwin's remarkable inversion of Paley's natural theology has failed

to dissuade those who are convinced of its value.

Perhaps this lack of success can be explained by the fact that these critiques were directed at the content of natural theology rather than the method. By highlighting glaring inconsistencies in the classical natural theological tradition, they actually enabled natural theology to complete its absorption of revealed theology. The theistic arguments claimed too much because they remained connected to ideas of God derived from classical philosophy and the Christian revelation. What Kant, in particular, offered was a way of purging the older natural theology of those inconsistencies. The very title of one of his works sums up precisely what the natural theological programme was about: Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone. It was the victory of this Kantian purge of natural theology which allowed it the dominant but covert place in German Protestantism to which Barth and his contemporaries objected.

This critique had little effect on Anglo-Saxon liberal theology. The tradition which was most wedded to the classical approach to natural theology (typified by the physico-theologians and William Paley) for the most part ignored the newer natural theology of Kant. The failure of these philosophical critiques to convince those who were committed to the older natural theological (or physico-theological) programme becomes easier to understand when its ideological utility is considered. Physico-theology was promoted by the scientific establishment of the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because of its apologetic value for science: it presented scientific research as a quasi-religious enterprise and thus established the moral worth of science education. As the lowest common denominator for theist and deist alike it offered them common ground from which to attack atheism as irrational as well as morally reprehensible. Related to its polemical value against atheism was its political utility: by presenting the natural order as divine it allowed 'natural' forms of government such as constitutional monarchy to be seen as divinely inspired. Thus the advocates of natural theology were able to take even Darwinism in their stride.

Turning to the theological objections to natural theology, the successors of Barth focus their attention on its theological function. Natural theology first established itself in a theological tradition which was seeking a stable synthesis of a Neoplatonism mediated through the theology of St Augustine and a Platonised Aristotelianism advocated by St Thomas Aquinas. The most important of its antecedents was the natural theology of Hellenistic culture. Thus its intellectual context was strongly dualistic. The accepted epistemology involved a sharp dualism between natural and supernatural knowledge: between reason and faith. Corresponding to this was an equally sharp cosmological dualism between God and creation: divine action was limited, in semi-deistic fashion, to evoking creaturely activity already latent in creation. In

this situation, natural theology provided a vital logical bridge between the world and God (Torrance 1980, 80).

Macquarrie's contention that without natural theology there can be no link between faith and reason suggests that it performs the same function today. Taken together with natural theology's continuing association with a dualism of God's Being and Act and a deistic gulf between God and creation, this suggests that natural theology is incapable, of itself of sustaining an orthodox doctrine of the Trinity¹⁷. The relevance of Barth's relocation of this doctrine thus becomes clear.

However, the central Barthian objection to natural theology as defined above is that it makes human reason the decisive factor in the knowledge of God. For Barth, "there can be as little question of a co-operation of reason in the knowledge of the true God, as of co-operation of the human will in the fulfilment of the divine commandments" (Barth 1946, 97). In other words, the paradox of grace extends also to the knowledge of God.

In contrast to this, natural theology is founded upon the presupposition that rational inquiry into the structures of this world can provide us with (limited) public knowledge of God: or at least with evidence of his existence. At the very starting point of theology this research programme divorces the knowledge of God from the grace of God. For Barth this approach is objectionable for a number of reasons.

Perhaps the most important objection for a Reformed

theologian is that it fails to take full account of the radical nature of human sinfulness. Natural knowledge of God is possible in principle but not in fact because of the distortion imposed by sin upon all human activities (Barth 1946, 107). A related objection is that knowledge of a created order which is divorced from grace merely exacerbates the problem of evil. For Barth, what Brunner refers to as preserving grace "might just as well be our condemnation to a kind of antechamber of hell!" (Barth 1946, 84).

In one form or another natural theology plays a key role in the religious quest of humankind. It forms the basis of all generalised philosophical or religious concepts of God (in which the divine character is established either by extrapolation from or negation of the characteristics perceived in the structures of this world). Far from providing the bridge by which one can move from such skeletal knowledge of God to the much fuller knowledge of God possible through divine revelation, it allows the latter to be reduced to an element in man's religious quest. The western bias in favour of the rational has meant that, in practice, wherever natural theology has started as the handmaiden of revelation she has sooner or later become the mistress. This bias is amply demonstrated by the covert adoption of the Averroist doctrine of the two verities which, not content with setting faith and reason in opposition, suggested that the truths of reason were of a higher order than those of faith. The same bias is

visible in the deists' advocacy of natural religion, and Hegel's treatment of religion and philosophy.

Such an approach is impossible to reconcile with a theology which starts from the self-revelation of God to humankind. It is false, not because its statements are false, but because man is false. Barth is opposed to it because of its motivation. As Torrance puts it,

natural theology as such arises out of man's natural existence and is part of the whole movement in which he develops his own autonomy and seeks a naturalistic explanation for himself within the universe. (Torrance 1984, 290)

This may be illustrated with an analogy from the natural sciences. All human sciences are characterised by a tension between an obedient understanding of the object of study and man's desire to predict and control. Barth understands natural theology as the religious expression of that desire to predict and control: to make even God fit into our self-understanding. This suggests that even when met on its own ground, natural theology is susceptible to a particularly damaging criticism: that of Feuerbach. To continue the analogy with the natural sciences this is the religious equivalent of recognising that such an instrumentalist approach ultimately surrenders any claim to give us knowledge of an objective reality.

It follows from this that, for the natural theologian, our present understanding of the structures of the world is normative (Webster 1986, 123). Thus it may impart to the science of its day a dogmatic status which may impede future research. It may also result in a conservatism which

favours the social and political status quo (thus rendering Christianity politically neutral and morally impotent). Alternatively it may be used, as in some forms of liberation theology, to dignify the revolutionary inclinations of the theologian with the status of an ordinance of creation. Barth asks of all such claims, "Can such a claim be anything other than the rebellious establishment of some very private Weltanschauung as a kind of papacy?" (Barth 1946, 86f.).

Finally, it is worth noting that many of the contemporary developments of natural theology are remarkably unhelpful when it comes to developing a theology of nature. This is because, following the insights of Kant, they have become highly anthropocentric. The science of God's activity in the world has become the science of human religious experience. Thus George Hendry cites the anthropological concentration of modern natural theology as one of the reasons for the continuing eclipse of the doctrine of creation (Hendry 1971/72, 417).

(iii) The limits of a theology of nature: However, Barth goes further than the Reformers. His radical alternative to natural theology appears to eliminate the need for a general revelation. This has resulted in accusations of a subjectivising tendency in his view of revelation (e.g., Berkouwer 1955, 330).

Why does Barth proceed in this manner? He stresses that man can only know God as a result of God's self-revelation. In his present fallen condition such encounters entail God's coming to us in grace and reconciliation:

through his Son Jesus Christ. The existence of a general revelation creates the possibility of a knowledge of God which is independent of the knowledge mediated by his gracious encounter with us in Christ. As soon as the dialectic created by the early Reformers' stress on human sinfulness is lost, this becomes a basis for a theology of the first article. Such a theology presumes that a knowledge of God as Creator may be attained from the structures of the world without reference to His special revelation in Christ. In so doing it assumes that some knowledge of God's Being can be attained independently of a knowledge of his saving activity: it thus opens the door to a modalistic conception of the Trinity.

Does this indicate that a theology of nature is futile or misguided? This would be the case only if nature were regarded as a second book of revelation: a source of knowledge of God supplementary to that found in Scripture. Barth's view of revelation does not exclude the possibility of a theology of nature within the limits of revelation alone. On the contrary, Torrance argues that Barth's approach effectively integrates the content of natural theology into the framework of Christian dogmatics (Torrance 1980, 90-109). Similarly Jüngel, in his development of Barth's theology, speaks of the possibility of a "more natural theology" which is a theory of the enrichment of man and his world by the incarnation (Webster 1986, 127): a doctrine of the worldly implications of the Christian revelation.

Creation has been divested of any revelatory content: the Christian theologian is not at liberty to supplement or qualify our knowledge of God with information gleaned from the natural or social sciences. Calvin spoke of a general revelation in the structures of the world which could be perceived only through the spectacles of special revelation. Barth prefers to speak of signs and witnesses: there is in the way this world is constituted that which reflects the one revelation of God in Christ. For Barth, the world is sacramental but not revelatory.

Thus Barth's rejection of natural theology need not be seen as a barrier to a theology of nature. Indeed, in the midst of his most strident repudiation of the former he nevertheless warns that "it would be advisable to be careful about statements such as that man alone is capable of receiving the Word of God" (Barth 1946, 88). However, Barth himself failed to develop the worldly implications of revelation. That such a development is possible within a broadly Barthian context is clear from Jüngel's "more natural theology": an account of the one light which enlightens, and thereby enriches, the world.

Thus a theology of nature does not seek knowledge of God from the natural world. Rather it looks at nature in the light of God. It examines the implications for our world (and our relationship to it) of this enrichment of the world by the incarnation.

(b) The impropriety of nature as a theological concept

The preceding section has gone some way to clarifying the methodology of a Christian theology of nature by ruling out as illegitimate the use of the tradition of natural theology. Thus a theology of nature may not be developed as a prolegomenon to a revealed theology. On the contrary, if Christian theology is to attend to nature it must do so in the light of the Christian revelation. But is this either possible or desirable?

One possible response to the recent spate of calls for a theology of nature is to argue that the concept of nature implies a metaphysical position incommensurable with Christian theology. This view has been discussed with some care by Kaufman 1981.

He begins with a note of warning: theologians must always be self-critical of their use of non-Biblical concepts. Thus any theology of nature must give careful consideration to the concept of nature.

The first thing to note about this concept is its multivalence¹⁸. Because of the extreme complexity of its usage, Kaufman restricts himself to a consideration of its use in such phrases as 'the order of nature' and 'the natural world'. Here he observes an ambiguity which goes beyond mere linguistic confusion. Nature denotes both the totality of powers and processes (including man and all his works) and the polar opposite of culture. Taking the latter as his starting point, Kaufman defines nature as

the widest context of human life, and thus our most fundamental home, viewed as wilderness ("untouched by human hand") rather than on some analogy or image drawn from the teleological and meaning-filled orders of society and culture. (Kaufman 1981, 218)

A comparison of this definition with Kant's concept of world leads him to suggest that nature is a more concrete, more immediate concept. Being an object of our experience in a way that world cannot be, nature more readily becomes an object of religious devotion. But it is an idol which is implicitly metaphysical. It leads us to believe that the reality we experience has no place for purpose, meaning or value.

He then contrasts this with the traditional (i.e., western) Christian metaphysics which, he believes, asserts that ultimate reality is moral and personal. Thus it sets God and man over against nature. At best the nonhuman is of secondary importance. Thus,

The rest of creation, though always recognized and sometimes acknowledged and even reflected upon, simply was not of central theological interest or importance, and (with the exception of the angels) never became the subject of any technical theological vocabulary. (Kaufman 1981, 222)

In spite of the balancing tradition of responsible stewardship, Kaufman concludes that a theology that takes nature seriously will entail a radical re-examination of the Christian concept of God. A corollary of this is the impossibility of merely equating nature and the Christian concept of creation. In his view this would be merely a glossing over of the fundamental issue, namely that

The very ideas of God and humanity, as they have gradually been worked out over millenia, are so framed as to blur or even conceal our embeddedness in the natural order as we now are increasingly conceiving it. (Kaufman 1981, 226)

On the other hand the apparent lack of purpose, meaning and value in nature causes him to doubt the value of a more naturalistic approach. He fears that the theological use of this concept may lead us to de-personalise a universe which Christianity regards as fundamentally personal.

In the end Kaufman leaves us with questions rather than answers. He fails to offer us a middle path between a personalistic but anti-ecological theism and a de-personalising naturalism. But is the dilemma as stark as he suggests? We must not forget that the understanding of nature which he has examined was itself the product of a scientific culture steeped in the Christian traditions.

It is worth noting that his definition of nature places too much weight on the purposelessness of nature. Purposeful activity is not the exclusive prerogative of the human species as any ethologist would be quick to point out. It is true that strict philosophical naturalism demands the elimination of teleological explanation. The success of the antiteleological programme in the sciences is well illustrated by the following poignant observation: "The more the universe seems comprehensible the more it also seems pointless" (Weinberg 1977, 154). However, as this comment suggests, we must distinguish between purposes and (ultimate) purpose. If Kaufman means that purposes are absent from nature, then he is simply wrong. If he means

that it lacks an ultimate purpose then he is covertly assuming that human culture (in contrast to nature) possesses an ultimate purpose.

For the forerunners of the Newtonian world view teleology was not excluded from nature. On the contrary, scientists such as Robert Boyle and John Ray omitted teleology from their scientific accounts of the world precisely because they accepted its reality and recognised that it was not susceptible to the same mode of investigation as were efficient causes. This tradition of regarding nature as teleologically neutral rather than anti-teleological is probably still typical of the sciences. Indeed there remain many scientists and non-scientists whose concept of nature still contains an implicit assumption that the natural world is purposeful.

But even if lack of purpose were implicit in the concept of nature this would not, as Kaufman seems to suggest, preclude its use in Christian theology. Two quite different lines of theological reasoning can be adduced in support of this contention.

First, purpose is by no means as central to Christian theology as Kaufman suggests. Tillich, for example, has put on record his doubts about the propriety of using this concept in Christian theology (Tillich 1953, 263-64). From a completely different theological perspective, Moltmann has made very similar observations. In his case, he questions the tendency to connect purpose and meaning. For him one of the meanings of the Gospel is precisely the

proclamation of liberation from bondage to a purpose, enabling all creation to participate in the eschatological celebration (Moltmann 1973, 56).

Second, theologians must always be on their guard when they make use of concepts from the culture in which they live. As Barth rightly insisted, the meaning of terms used in Christian theology must always be governed by the Christian revelation and not by their secular etymology. Insofar as Kaufman has reminded us that nature may bear connotations which must be stripped away before the term may be used theologically he has done all would-be theologians of nature an important service¹⁹. However, to deny theologians the right to use, and in using to modify, the concept at all would be to undermine our attempts to respond to a major problem of our times.

If we are not deterred from a theology of nature by doubts about the theological propriety of concepts such as nature we must, nevertheless, take seriously Kaufman's point about the Christian concepts of God and humankind. The difficulty of speaking theologically about the nonhuman will not be alleviated without a major revision of the concepts and metaphors which have dominated western theology in recent centuries. This is the avenue adopted in this thesis, and it is my contention that just such a revision has been underway for some years. One weakness of Santmire's examination of western Christian attitudes to nature is its failure to relate those attitudes to our understanding of God. A major task of this thesis will be

make up for that deficiency.

(c) The influence of existentialism

At this point it is appropriate to examine a significant strand of contemporary theology which, deterred by its understanding of nature, has opted for an exclusive concentration on humankind in relation to God. I refer, of course, to Christian existentialism.

Existentialists insist that a statement, in order to be meaningful, must address one's own present existence: it must be personally involving. Thus Christian existentialists outlaw from their theology all merely general statements about God and the world: theological statements must say something about God's relationship to me. Furthermore the personal existence so involved is defined in historical rather than natural terms. In other words, self is defined by historical events and personal decisions rather than by some essential nature. Thus personal existence is at root dynamic and open to the future in contrast to some classical understandings of human nature which appear static and determined by the past.

The implications of this tendency for a Christian theology of nature may be seen by examining the place given to nature by one of the most influential Christian existentialists, Rudolf Bultmann.

Both of the above points bear directly on the Christian understanding of nature, and both may be illustrated from

Bultmann's own work. The former appears in Bultmann's concern to find the most appropriate way of putting the questions of theology. For Bultmann, all theological questions are questions about human existence. It follows from this presupposition that God and nature are only treated insofar as they are relevant to such questions. From the outset the questions he poses are so couched as to threaten the nonhuman with relegation to a secondary place in theology.

The second point pervades Bultmann's theology in the form of a sharp contrast between nature and history. This contrast is well illustrated by the introduction to one of his early works, Jesus and the Word:

a fundamental presupposition of this book is that the essence of history cannot be grasped by "viewing" it, as we view our natural environment in order to orient ourselves in it. Our relationship to history is wholly different from our relationship to nature. Man, if he rightly understands himself, differentiates himself from nature. When he observes nature, he perceives there something objective which is not himself. When he turns his attention to history, however, he must admit himself to be a part of history; he is considering a living complex of events in which he is essentially involved. He cannot observe this complex objectively as he can observe natural phenomena; for in every word which he says about history he is saying at the same time something about himself. Hence there cannot be impersonal observation of history in the same sense that there can be impersonal observation of nature. (Bultmann 1958, 11)

What understanding of nature can we deduce from this and other statements in Bultmann's writings²⁰? We appear to be confronted with two contrasting realms: nature and history. Man observes nature but participates in history. He is able to differentiate himself from nature since it is

constituted by events as objectified by human reason whereas it is impossible for him to disentangle himself from history in the same way.

In his essay "The Question of Wonder" Bultmann characterises nature as "the law-governed complex of all that happens" (Bultmann 1969, 252), and he distinguishes it from world. He also distinguishes nature from creation in the following terms,

if one tries to apply the ideas of creation and wonder to the unending, law-conforming process which we call nature, the whole idea of wonder becomes meaningless. If all that happens is wonderful, then there is nothing further; God and world are equated. (Bultmann 1969, 250f.)

These contrasts are significant and relate to the primary contrast between nature and history but, for the moment we will continue to examine what he has to say about nature.

Nature is governed by law; it is a closed deterministic causal order comprehensible in terms of rational thought²¹ (Bultmann 1957, 6f.). It stands in direct opposition to the concepts of wonder, miracle, and divine action (Bultmann 1969, 250, 253). By the same token, providence, which he describes as "the teleological character which can be discerned in the working of natural law" (Bultmann 1958, 118), is a concept of nature: it thus becomes problematic for an existential approach to theology.

Most striking of all is his assertion that life is not a phenomenon of nature. Claiming to follow Pauline usage, he describes life as "the life a man leads in his concrete

existence, the intentionality of human existence" (Bultmann 1952, 210). Life understood in this sense is not even a phenomenon of the world. On the contrary, "it belongs solely to God and his Revealer" (Bultmann 1969, 172).

Taken together, these points seem to suggest an extremely Cartesian understanding of nature²². However, it should be noted that Bultmann, having presented nature as a particular way of interpreting the world, invariably gives this interpretation a negative evaluation. His negative view of this understanding of nature is strikingly summed up in his assertion that nature is a concept of man in the mode of sinner (Bultmann 1969, 247).

I believe there is an ambiguity running throughout his treatment of nature. On the one hand there is this use of nature to denote a mechanistic interpretation of our physical environment. This would constitute an exclusive alternative to history understood as a way of looking at the world which makes humankind an integral part of the world. However, when challenged about this apparent dualism of nature and history, he explicitly denied that he worked with such a dualism. In a reply to Paul Minear's account of his eschatology, Bultmann insists that nature and history are inseparable and that the distinction is merely phenomenological (Bultmann 1966, 267). He does not support any form of dualism between natural and historical events themselves.

This is confirmed by a strand of more positive statements about nature running through his writings in

parallel with the ones noted above. For example, "there is no need of escaping beyond the present or outside of nature. Nowhere does Jesus say that nature is evil" (Bultmann 1958, 77). Similarly, in contrast to his view that nature is the sinner's interpretation of world events, Jesus sees nature only as "the God-given world in which man receives the gift of God and must prove himself obedient to God's will" (Bultmann 1958, 43). Nature in the sense of environment is not separable from history. It

does not exist for its own sake, for the drama of man's history is enacted in its midst, and whether it wills or no, it is drawn into the complex of that drama, becomes involved in the fate of man, is violated and despoiled by man. (Bultmann 1960b, 73)

Bultmann reaffirms the traditional doctrine of dominium terrae but recognises the ambiguity of that lordship. Elsewhere he qualifies the lordship of humankind with the comment that it is given to us as creatures (Bultmann 1961, 221): it is conditional upon authentic existence. When we fail to recognise that we are related to God as creature to creator we become the slaves and destroyers of the world (Bultmann 1957, 3).

Giving Bultmann the benefit of the doubt for the moment, we may say that he opts for a historical interpretation of all events. However, as the last paragraph suggests, this is by no means the end of the story. He recognises two mutually exclusive ways of viewing historical existence: an inauthentic way as world²³, and an authentic way as creation.

World translates the fallen human kosmos of the New

Testament. He says that "It is not conceived at all as an objective phenomenon. The 'world'--is primarily mankind" (Bultmann 1969, 166). It is "the specific reality in which I live and act, my world" (Bultmann 1969, 252). It is a historical reality which "is never objectified as a natural order whose eternal laws are open to intellectual apprehension" (Bultmann 1960a, 17).

Creation, however, takes on a rather different meaning from the one we are used to.

Statements which speak of God's actions as cosmic events are illegitimate. The affirmation that God is creator cannot be a theoretical statement about God as creator mundi in a general sense. The affirmation can only be a personal confession that I understand myself to be a creature which owes its existence to God. It cannot be made as a neutral statement, but only as a thanksgiving and surrender (Bultmann 1958, 69).

Thus, faith in the Creator (Bultmann's preferred way of expressing references to creation) means a recognition and acceptance of one's (past, present, and future) dependence upon God. Since the demise of Cartesian dualism (and because of the influence of existentialism) few theologians would deny that this element of self-involvement is a necessary dimension of faith in creation²⁴. However, in order to defend this element, Bultmann feels it necessary to deny the possibility that such self-involving statements have objective implications.

Bultmann's insistence on the exclusively existential

meaning of theological statements makes it impossible for him to embark on a theology of nature as such. Natural events are properly understood only in terms of humankind (Bultmann 1960b, 73). Furthermore they are irrelevant to Jesus Christ except as they provide a stage for human activity (Bultmann 1958, 43, 77). Accordingly, he denies that the eschaton involves any transformation of nature (Bultmann 1966, 268). It comes as no surprise to find that for Bultmann the doctrine of creation implies that God has placed the earth at the disposal of the human race. Nature has no relevance in itself but only as our servant. Similarly human threats to the environment are relevant only when they are also threats to human existence.

It is instructive to compare this view of nature with that of his close associate, the philosopher Heidegger. He classifies the nonhuman into two categories: all natural occurrences are either vorhanden (merely being to hand) or zuhanden (present at hand: relevant to humankind because integrated into our instrumental system)²⁵.

We may conclude that Bultmann, and his fellow existentialists, while rightly calling into question the reductionistic tendencies of nineteenth century naturalism, have maintained and intensified the anthropological concentration characteristic of much Christian theology. This is not to imply that existentialists have not been concerned about the ecological crisis, but simply that their philosophy does not have the categories to tackle the issue.

(d) Agnosticism with regard to the world of science

A final factor which hinders the development of modern theologies of nature is the widespread belief that theology ought to be agnostic with regard to the world of science. Clearly the rejection of natural theology and the heightened anthropological concentration encouraged by existentialism have contributed to this belief. However, it had already established itself long before the appearance of either of these factors.

The suggestion that theology should refrain from commenting on areas which are properly the objects of natural scientific investigation dates back at least to Herbert Spencer and was widely adopted in the late nineteenth century as a way in which theology and science could coexist. However, as Aubrey Moore pointed out, Spencer's modus vivendi was, in reality a Trojan Horse (Moore 1891, 43f.). The natural sciences by their very nature continually expand into new areas of reality. Thus areas which were once regarded as the preserve of religion are now firmly within the sphere of science. The boundaries proposed by Spencer may have protected science from theology but they did nothing to prevent incursions in the opposite direction. It is not surprising that the warfare metaphor for the relationship between science and religion developed at the same time as this uneasy truce.

(i) The two realms and complementarity: A variety of similar, though more sophisticated, views have been prevalent in the twentieth century. Perhaps closest to

Spencer's position are those who see reality as a duality of realms: natural and supernatural; temporal and eternal; natural and historical; physical and mental (or spiritual). We have already seen the impact of this approach in theology in the discussion of Bultmann's contribution. Similar comments could have been made about Karl Heim's proposal that science be restricted to the dimension (or space) of public objects and theology to the dimension of selfhood. The effect of both approaches is to evacuate the concept of divine action of any reference to the biophysical world.

A third approach which may yield similar results is that of the application of post-Wittgensteinian linguistic analysis to theology. Some advocates of this approach see theology (and religious discourse in general) as a non-cognitive language game quite distinct from the game of science²⁶. Thus religion may be reduced to a way of interpreting the world in which we live and of commending particular attitudes to life.

The concept of complementarity is often deployed in an effort to justify the maintenance of such an approach. However, the analogy with this physical principle breaks down when it is recalled that, in physics, the language of complementarity refers to different objective situations. Wave and particle descriptions of an electron are complementary in the sense the former offer more adequate models of some events while the latter apply to other events. There is no suggestion (as there so often is when

linguistic analysis is applied to science and theology) that one set of events or one description is more real than the other. Nor does the principle in its original form propose any veto on the search for a unitary description of those events (on the contrary, physics has developed the whole field of quantum mechanics precisely as a unitary approach).

(ii) The silence of revelation: Finally there are those who warn us that revelation has little to say about the natural world. Thus they argue that we should think very carefully before shifting the emphasis from the relationship between God and the human race to the complex of relationships between God, humankind and the world.

A typical advocate of this position would be Hendrikus Berkhof. More than once when referring to nature, he reminds us that "while we know the mode of God's concern for man, we do not know the mode of his concern for nature" (Berkhof 1979, 536). Furthermore, he retains the notion, widespread in twentieth century theology, that the world view of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures sets history apart from nature. On such a view nature is no more than the stage upon which the events of history occur. Thus history is "the only realm where the secret of creation is revealed and fulfilled" (Berkhof 1968, 51).

Indeed he is prepared to go further still: "Creation and nature are pre-history, directed towards man" (Berkhof 1968, 52). He spells this out in his systematic theology when he asserts that "the purpose of the world is the

Kingdom of God, as the full realization of human existence through human fellowship with God" (Berkhof 1979, 165). In his view the goodness of creation referred to in Genesis 1 merely indicates that the natural world is "'suitable for its purpose," namely communion between God and man" (Berkhof 1979, 171).

In contrast to the anthropocentric tone of these statements he recognises that "the nonhuman creation everywhere, and especially in the infinite space of the interstellar world where there are no humans, has its own for us inaccessible relatedness to God" (Berkhof 1979, 165). He regards this as a good reason for humility when speaking of creation and nature: "As a creation of God which is different from man, it is largely unfathomable to us and as such a pointer to the unfathomableness of its creator; and that is cause for us to be humble" (Berkhof 1979, 423).

However Berkhof's expression of this humility consists of denying the systematic theologian "direct use of any biblical statement on creation for the construction of his doctrine of creation" (Berkhof 1979, 159). In his view, most of the biblical creation statements are secondary: a husk of pre-scientific beliefs which may be discarded with impunity (Berkhof 1968, 46). He praises post-Enlightenment and historical-critical developments of Reformed theology for eliminating considerable cosmological content from the doctrine of creation.

Of course this does not imply the complete absence of revealed knowledge of the natural world. There is a kernel

of revelation regarding nature, namely that nature shares with humankind the status of creature. The revealed de-divinisation of nature means that "In contrast to the worship of nature," the Bible "makes room for natural science and mastery over nature" (Berkhof 1979, 162). In conjunction with his anthropology, this view leads him into outright support for human domination of nature:

in the cosmos around man, with which he cannot primarily have a relationship of love, the other element of his nature, that of freedom, must particularly come to stand out. Freedom means that he lifts himself above the common lot he shares with the cosmos (partially, but increasingly more) and takes it into his own hands. With the same freedom with which he is called to respond to God's love, he must have dominion over the world, managing and ruling, cultivating and transforming it with his technology and culture. (Berkhof 1979, 186)

If we were to accept Berkhof's stated views on the matter, we would have little choice but to remain silent with regard to the natural world. However, as we shall see in Chapter 5, the Bible has much more to say about the non-human than Berkhof is willing to admit. That the bulk of this is a dispensable husk is an interpretation built upon the anti-ecological pole of the Christian ambivalence towards the material world.

5. CONTOURS OF A THEOLOGY OF NATURE

Which Christian doctrines will be most relevant to our study? Before proceeding to examine western Christian understandings of nature we should consider in a provisional

manner which aspects of systematic theology have been most relevant in the development of these attitudes.

(a) The dogmatic locus for a theology of nature

(i) The necessity for such a locus: Theological attention to nature may be necessary, but need it find a specific dogmatic locus? As a result of the environmental crisis considerable attention has been given to the development of a Christian ecological ethic and (amongst Roman Catholics) to a creation-centred spirituality. Given such extensive and diverse consideration is it necessary to seek to integrate such reflection into the traditional loci of dogmatic theology?

Two considerations prompt me to take such a course of action. The first is the susceptibility of occasional theologies of nature to criticism from environmentalists. As long as theological attention to nature remains occasional it will be possible to dismiss it as merely a reflection of environmentalism's current fashionability. Thus theological consideration of nature will remain vulnerable to changes in secular fashions and attitudes.

The second consideration arises from a particular way of conceiving theology. While it is true that theology properly denotes rational attention to divine reality, it may also have a much broader connotation. It can justifiably be extended to include rational attention to every aspect of reality from the perspective of faith in the divine reality. In this sense, not only God but also

faith itself and the entire physical, biological, social, psychological, and spiritual context of human existence become proper objects of theological attention. Clearly an overview of the dogmatic loci (even on the scale of Barth's Church Dogmatics) cannot hope to do justice to every area of reality but it can, and should, point out the proper theological context for each of those subjects. Given such an understanding of the task of systematic theology and in the light of the environmental debate, failure to locate theological attention to nature in this way suggests a lack of seriousness which strengthens the case of Christianity's environmentalist critics. At the very least it constitutes an inexcusable (because deliberate) loss of completeness.

(ii) A provisional locus: Twentieth century industrial society tends to look at nature technocentrically and, hence, anthropocentrically. Thus a would-be theologian of nature might seek to relate his theology of nature to Christian anthropology. By tradition, such theological anthropologies relate the origin, existence and end of human beings (individually and corporately) to God the Creator. It would be a natural extension of this approach to include a discussion of the created context of humankind.

However, there is an important objection to this approach. It assumes without further discussion that the nonhuman is nothing more than the context in which human existence is carried on. Now it is true that any theological understanding of nature will put considerable emphasis on the significance of nature as the created

context of human existence. Christian theology insists that the human creature was placed in this world, not thrown. It is also true that theology may well have to settle for a reverent agnosticism with respect to much of God's purposes in the nonhuman creation. Nevertheless, theological attention to nature must respect contemporary scientific understandings of the universe, and one of the most basic presuppositions of modern science is the Copernican Principle that the human race does not occupy a privileged position in the universe²⁶.

Theological treatments of the created context of human existence were traditionally located in the context of the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo. Specifically, nature was examined from a theological perspective, and sometimes at great length, in the patristic and mediaeval hexaemera. However, since the end of the Middle Ages such an approach has become rare, with more recent theological accounts of creation preferring to move straight to anthropology after treating the broader aspects of the doctrine of creation relatively briefly.

More importantly, such treatments of the nonhuman creation lend themselves to an essentially static interpretation. The divine creative activity is readily seen as one of creating and ordering an unchanging stage for the drama of human history. This is reflected in the distinction between nature and history which came to dominate European thinking on the matter during the Enlightenment (and which, all too often, still dominates

our thinking in spite of a century of evolutionary biology).

Contemporary theological attention to nature must recognise, in form as well as content, the fact that science understands the world in essentially dynamic terms. The old distinction between nature and history has been relativised, if not entirely abolished²⁷. It is now widely accepted that the events of nature are, in a real sense, historical rather than merely temporal²⁸. Such an approach is consonant with a theology which ultimately refers all events to the creative activity of God. In chapter 6 I shall propose that the nonhuman creation be treated under the locus of general providence rather than creatio ex nihilo in order to emphasise this dynamic understanding of the natural world.

(b) Influence of the doctrine of God

The environmentalists' critique of Christian theology focusses exclusively on western Christianity. Indeed Lynn White explicitly excludes the eastern churches from his critique (White 1967, 1206). It is a striking fact of history that the Christian East, equipped with similar resources (intellectual, material, political, and spiritual) to the West, did not give rise to an exploitative technology in the same way as its partner in Christendom. Is this a historical accident? Or can the cause be traced to a significant difference in the philosophical and theological presuppositions of West and East?

White argues that Christianity in its western forms is

peculiarly adapted to encourage the growth of exploitative attitudes towards the natural world. However, in the east, a different understanding of the spiritual life hindered this adaptation: "The Greek saint contemplates; the Western saint acts. The implications of Christianity would emerge more easily in the Western atmosphere" (White 1967, 1206) While this sweeping generalisation is easily falsified, it does suggest deep theological differences between East and West which may have a bearing on the observed difference in attitudes to nature.

Generally speaking, the spiritual and theological writings of eastern orthodoxy offer a more uniformly positive view of the material world than is to be found in most western theology. This may be partially due to the lasting effects of the condemnation of Origenism. However, it is too consistent to be merely a reaction.

Gordon Kaufman's point that greater attention to nature will necessitate a revision of western conceptions of God (and humankind) suggests that we might look for the source of this difference in different conceptions of God. More specifically, the Christian traditions of East and West are deeply divided over the trinitarian nature of God. The twentieth century rediscovery of trinitarianism has led to the realisation that this doctrine has been crucial in shaping the development of other Christian doctrines. This influence can be traced in christology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. The apparent east-west divergence in Christian attitudes to nature encourages us to trace a

similar influence at this point too.

Preliminary corroboration for this postulate may be drawn from an exceptional case in the history of western spirituality, namely the Celtic tradition. In spite of its geographical location, the Celtic Church maintained its own distinctive approach to Christianity, largely independent of Roman Catholicism. In theology and liturgical practice it retained significant links with the eastern churches. The features of Celtic spirituality which are of particular relevance to the present study are the combination of an pervasive trinitarianism with a very positive evaluation of the material world. One may also note, in passing, St Francis' insistence on trinitarianism and the goodness of God's material creation.

(c) General arguments for a trinitarian approach

Apart from the apparent correlation between an emphasis on the doctrine of the Trinity and a positive evaluation of the material creation two general arguments can be put forward in favour of a trinitarian approach to providence.

Firstly, the doctrine of the Trinity is the distinguishing feature of Christian theology. Furthermore, the form and content of theology is critically dependent on who God is and has revealed himself to be. As Irenaeus put it, "One has not to understand God from what he has done, but the things he has done, from God" (cited by Jüngel 1976, 6). A theology which claims to be Christian necessarily refers its readers to the God who has revealed himself in

the form of a personal history embedded in creation history (namely, Jesus Christ). Indeed, it has been said of the Incarnation that, "by thinking through the meaning of this event in terms of the Trinity one finds in embryo the key to the solution of God's relation to the world" (O'Donnell 1983, 198). If so, the only adequate basis for a Christian ontology is the doctrine of the Trinity. John Zizioulas makes this point when he argues that the basis for the Patristic attack on the ontological monism of Hellenistic thought was precisely the trinitarian conception of being as persons-in-relation (Zizioulas 1985, 35ff.). Without the doctrine of the Trinity and its attendant participational ontology it is hard to see how accounts of the relationship between God and his creation can be anything but sub-personal.

In contrast to this trinitarianism is the emphatically monotheistic tone of many classical western Christian doctrines of providence. They have been developed on the basis of a general concept of God rather than the Christian revelation of God as triune. That this is so can be seen by comparing the Christian doctrine of providence with its Stoic, Jewish, and Muslim counterparts. Even as biblical a theologian as Calvin can couch his doctrine of providence in terms which strongly suggest Stoic influence. The lack of a distinctively Christian dimension to the doctrine is underlined by the fact that a recent study of providence can offer a single account which is claimed to be equally acceptable to those "who hold to an orthodox variation of

Christianity or Judaism or Islam" (Langford 1981, 155).

One effect of this loss of any distinctively Christian character to the doctrine of providence is to turn it into apparently neutral ground. Because the Christian, Jewish and Muslim views of providence thus appear to be identical, the doctrine comes to be regarded as public knowledge supposedly accessible to all men of good will and sound reason. As a result, it provides a justification for doing natural theology. But in this capitulation to the religious impulse of humankind it creates room within theology for non-Christian concepts of God and natural analogies for the relationship between God and his creation. In particular, a distinctively Christian approach rules out the organismic and mechanistic analogies for the world. Their recurrence within Christian theology is evidence of the failure of the doctrine of providence.

Secondly, the particular character of the doctrine of providence lends itself to a trinitarian treatment. It is concerned with the maintenance of creatures in and through time and their being brought to an eschatological fulfilment. Providence has to do with divine action in creation history. Thus, "there is a basic correlation between how one conceives time and one's doctrine of providence or something very like a doctrine of providence" (Mason 1982, 6). It follows that an adequate account of the doctrine of providence is bound up with an adequate Christian understanding of time. And this brings us back to the doctrine of the Trinity. This is so because, as I noted

above, God has revealed himself through a personal history embedded in creation history. In other words, God has permitted himself to be identified in temporal terms: he is the one who raised Jesus from the dead (Jenson 1982b, 21). The Christian doctrine of the Trinity speaks of a divine life which is definitive of created temporality.

NOTES

1. Objectively speaking, these have until recently been a secondary factor because of their restriction to parts of the ecosphere least susceptible to such damage (Lovelock 1979, 121).
2. This point, while widely accepted by environmentalists (e.g., Meadows et al. 1972) is disputed by advocates of traditional liberal economic policies (e.g., Simon & Kahn 1984).
3. The seminal article is, without doubt, White 1967. Similar arguments may be found in Black 1970; Nicholson 1970, 264f.; Passmore 1980. However, Passmore focusses on the culpability of the Hellenistic tradition which he presents as a malign influence on an environmentally innocuous Hebrew tradition.
4. It is widely believed that the methodological and other presuppositions upon which western science was founded were the result of distinctively Christian beliefs about the relationship of the world to God. See e.g., Hooykaas 1973, Russell 1985.
5. Given the often strained relations between the early Franciscans and the institutional church such comments are hardly surprising. However, it has been argued that Francis, for all his radicalism, was steeped in the Augustinian tradition (Santmire 1985, 106-19). As we shall see later, this was certainly true of the first great theologian of the Franciscan order.
6. Most of these amount to shifting the blame onto some other strand of the Christian religion, e.g., Robert Faricy argues that "at the origin of the contemporary aggressively exploitative attitude toward the world of nature lies not Christianity as such, but the Christianity of the protestant reformation" (Faricy 1987, 205; cf. Faricy 1982, 12-16). Gabriel Fackre draws a similar line between Protestantism and Cartesianism (Fackre 1973, 116-31). The weakness of

this strategy is that its success depends on the (implicit) denial that the target is a legitimate part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church!

A similar criticism applies to those who object to White's exegesis. It must be shown that either his exegesis is at odds with those of every Christian exegete or those exegetes who agree with him are heretical.

Barr 1972 offers a plausible exegetical argument against White. However, his case depends on denying the link between western science and presuppositions drawn from the Christian doctrine of creation.

7. For example, primitive use of fire-drive hunting methods (Black 1970, 9; Peacocke 1979, 277). It has also been pointed out that even in the case of societies which regard the natural world as religiously important environmental damage has still been widespread (Tuan 1970).
8. The breadth of opinion about what constitutes an appropriate ethical response to the situation detailed here ranges from Garrett Hardin's lifeboat ethics (which sanctions the privileged nations to hang on to their privilege at the expense of the developing nations in the hope of surviving the impending catastrophe) to various forms of reverence for life (which in extreme cases seem to put other species before humanity).
9. The spiritual motif is characterised by a tendency to present the Christian life in terms of ascent: the mediaeval itinerarium mentis. It is to be found in those seminal works of mediaeval spirituality, The Twelve Patriarchs and The Mystical Ark by Richard of St Victor and its influence can be traced to the present day (e.g. in the early writings of Thomas Merton).
10. The incongruity of this becomes clear when it is recalled that Ritschl is credited with attacking theological references to nature in the name of a Kantian expurgation of natural theology. In the very work which contains this complaint he asserts the purely instrumental role of nature thus, "nature is called into being to serve as a means to God's essential purpose in creating the world of spirits" (Ritschl 1902, 279).
11. Gilkey 1976 is highly critical of the understandings of providence articulated by nineteenth century liberalism (specifically Schleiermacher and Ritschl); twentieth century Krisis theology (the young Barth and Bultmann); and eschatological theology (a pastiche of Pannenberg, Moltmann, Metz, Alves, Gutierrez, and Braaten!).
12. Such a demand for theological completeness cannot be dismissed as merely a Hegelianising tendency in his thought. A similar demand is implicit in the passage just quoted from Ritschl and is to be found also in the writings of his evangelical opponent James Denney, e.g., "the doctrine of God, in the very nature of the case, is related to everything that enters into our

knowledge; all our world depends upon Him; and hence it follows that a systematic presentation of the doctrine of God involves a general view of the world through God. It must contain the ideas and the principles which enable us to look at our life and our world as a whole, and to take them into our religion, instead of leaving them outside" (Denney 1895, 1).

13. Criticisms of Barth's doctrine of creation and its implications for our understanding of nature have been expressed by, e.g., Brunner 1951, Deegan 1961, Macquarrie 1971/2, Idinopulos 1972, Young 1976, Santmire 1985 and Linzey 1986.
14. Only a tiny minority of physicists have attempted to maintain the older approach by means of the hyper-deterministic hidden variables theory.
15. I have not cited personalism as one of these factors in spite of its frequent association with the neglect of the nonhuman (e.g., Santmire 1985, 145-73). As I have already noted, that pioneer of personalism, Martin Buber, did not envisage it as excluding the nonhuman. And even Karl Barth refuses to deny the nonhuman creation some sort of receptivity to the Word of God (Barth 1946, 88).
16. This accusation is most frequently directed at Barth and the neo-orthodox school of theology (e.g., Macquarrie 1975, Santmire 1985, Stewart 1984, Wingren 1984).
17. Another factor which points in this direction is the advocacy by some natural theologians of a theology of the first article: a position which, Otto Weber argues, leads to a modalistic understanding of the Trinity and its banishment to the appendix of a dogmatic system (Weber 1981, 206f.).
18. Kaufman refers his readers to the more than fifteen distinct meanings of nature to be found in the Oxford English Dictionary. The most comprehensive account remains that of Lovejoy and Boas 1935, pp. 447-56, who list some thirty nine literary and philosophical uses of nature and a further twenty seven ethical, political, and religious uses derived from them.
19. For example one must beware of its axiological overtones (both positive and negative).
20. Such a study is complicated by the apparently loose use of nature, world and creation in the translations of his works.
21. To anyone influenced by Heidegger the notion that something can be comprehended rationally is cause to be suspicious of that thing. For "Thinking only begins at the point where we have come to know that Reason, glorified for centuries, is the most obstinate adversary of thinking" (Heidegger cited by Barrett 1961, 184).
22. Bultmann's view of nature is, in fact, sometimes treated in this way. For example, Barbour 1966, 431-34 concludes that he accepts without question the nineteenth century mechanistic view of the material

- universe.
23. In his earlier writings world appears to be prior to nature and history: the former being the way of interpreting world that gives rise to inauthentic existence and the latter being closely associated with faith in creation as that which gives rise to authentic existence.
 24. For example, Evans 1963 has developed Bultmann's view to show that creation discourse is self-involving. From a quite different perspective we find Barth affirming this position without thereby divesting the doctrine of creation of its objective content.
 25. Macquarrie defends Heidegger by pointing to hints of a more adequate philosophy of nature in his later work. According to this approach a non-reductionist view of nonhuman life is attainable by starting with human existence and working downwards (Macquarrie 1975, 72-75). However, the hints hardly add up to a philosophy of nature and it is not at all clear how this approach would overcome its highly anthropocentric starting point.
 26. This contradicts the recently fashionable Anthropic Principle which, in its stronger forms, suggests that rationality does indeed occupy a (causally) privileged position in the cosmos.
 27. This has happened in a number of ways not all of which would be acceptable to the Christian theologian. For example, nature and history may be fused together by a positivistic reduction of history to nature.
 28. According to Collingwood, Benedetto Croce's view of history reduces the distinction between nature and history from an objective one of two realms to a subjective one of two ways of relating events (Collingwood 1946, 199).

CHAPTER 2
GOD AND NATURE
IN THE THEOLOGY OF ST AUGUSTINE

Since the exploitative attitude to the natural world which so exercises the contemporary conscience evolved within the context of western Christianity, a natural starting point for the study of the latter would be the work of St Augustine. Following the line suggested by Gordon Kaufman any such study ought to examine his attitude to nature in relation to his understanding of God.

1. AUGUSTINE'S THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The study of Augustine's contribution to this issue is greatly complicated by his tortuous spiritual pilgrimage from paganism to Christianity. In response to his experiences he wrote a number of relevant writings which display considerable diversity and development. Thus it is not possible to present a simple uniform picture of his theology. However, Santmire 1985 argues that the trajectory of that development is clearly from the radically world-denying position of his Manichaean period towards a world-

affirming position resulting from years of dialogue between Neoplatonism and catholic Christianity. Ironically such a development is, at the same time, a movement from a radically materialistic position to an emphatically idealistic one (Brown 1967, 56). Thus, we must ask whether it is accurate to say that Augustine's work represents "the flowering of the ecological promise of classical Christian theology" (Santmire 1985, 73).

In theological terms Augustine may be described as post-Nicene and, specifically, post-Cappadocian. As regards his relationship to the general culture of ancient Rome he could be described as post-pagan and, specifically, post-Plotinian.

As a post-Nicene bishop, he consciously represented a victorious catholic Christianity. This had a twofold effect on his writings, particularly on his doctrine of the Trinity. The more striking of these is the non-controversial character of his De trinitate when compared with earlier works such as Hilary of Poitiers' work of the same name. The trinitarian controversy had been settled and Augustine was free to write with a graciousness which contrasts with the tone of his anti-Pelagian writings. Clearly he viewed his task as different from that of earlier trinitarian theologians. Their task had been defensive and apologetic; his was explanatory. He could assume his readers' assent to the trinitarian creed adopted by the Council of Constantinople in 381. And his purpose was to extend their understanding of this central mystery of the

faith.

He was also writing in the light of the Cappadocian theology which informed that council: he was able to take over the eastern doctrine as a finished product. Part and parcel of this doctrine was a sophisticated Greek trinitarian terminology. Although a technical terminology for the doctrine had existed in Latin since the time of Tertullian, Augustine was the first western theologian to do any serious work on the doctrine. Thus, in addition to the explanatory task, he was faced with the daunting hermeneutical task of reconciling the very sophisticated Greek trinitarian terminology with a rough and ready Latin terminology.

Turning to the general cultural context, he may be characterised as post-pagan in the sense that by this time paganism had virtually collapsed as a serious intellectual and religious challenge to Christianity. Christianity had been the state religion for four generations when he began work on the De trinitate. Thus the essential defensive role of the doctrine (its capacity to uniquely identify the Christian God over against the gods of paganism) was seriously obscured.

It is possible to be more specific about his cultural background. His pilgrimage from Manichaeism to Christianity via Neoplatonism is very well documented. But of the diverse influences on his subsequent theology the most profound was without doubt Neoplatonism. Thus we may describe him as post-Plotinian.

He was closely associated with those Christian intellectuals based in Milan who were attempting a critical appropriation of Neoplatonic philosophy and particularly the work of Plotinus and Porphyry. These Christian Platonists included not only his young friends of the Cassiciacum dialogues but also Bishop Ambrose and his spiritual adviser Simplicianus (a former pupil of Porphyry's Latin translator).

There can be little doubt that, like these friends, Augustine regarded Christianity as the key to synthesis of classical thought which had eluded Plotinus (O'Connell 1978, 10-27). This ensured that in the years of dialogue that followed his conversion, Christianity remained the dominant partner (Sorabji 1983, 167, 170f.). As we shall see, the Plotinian world view exerted such a strong influence on the young convert that thirty years later it still played a significant part in his trinitarian reflections. For that reason it will be worth summarising the essential features of Plotinus' philosophy before proceeding to look at Augustine's work.

Augustine's sympathy for the Neoplatonists is clear from his repeated approval of Porphyry whom he refers to as doctissimus and "the most notable pagan philosopher". In his De civitate Dei, he paints a remarkably sympathetic picture of the teachings of this man whom he believed to have been led astray by pride and demons. He presents the ontology of Porphyry and his master Plotinus as trinitarian. The philosophy of Neoplatonism was the closest approach of

pagan philosophy to Christian truth, only stopping short by failing to identify the second hypostasis of the NeoPlatonic trinity with the incarnate Son of God. Addressing the pagan successors of Porphyry directly, he says,

You assert the Father and his Son, whom you call the Intellect or Mind of the Father; you also speak of a being who is between the two, and we imagine that you are referring to the Holy Spirit. And it is your habit to call them three gods. In spite of your irregular terminology you Platonists have here some kind of intuition of the goal to which we must strive, however dimly seen through the obscurities of a subtle imagination. And yet you refuse to recognize the incarnation of the unchanging Son of God, which brings us salvation, so that we can arrive at those realities in which we believe, and which we can in some small measure comprehend. (Civ., 10.29)

The beginning and end of this system which came so close to apprehending the truth was the Plotinian doctrine of the One. This is the transcendent source and goal of all diversity. In Dean Inge's words, it was "the source from which the differentiation of unity and plurality proceeds; ...the transcendence of separability rather than the negation of plurality" (cited by O'Brien 1964, 18). However, unlike the orthodox account of the Christian God, the Neoplatonic One was not regarded as essence. Plotinus remained convinced of the Hellenistic belief that a reality could not be both determinate and unterminated (a belief rejected by the Cappadocians). As O'Brien comments, "The One is not essence nor existence nor intellect nor intelligible because of all these it is the generative principle and to be thus generative it must be, in this precise regard, 'other'" (O'Brien 1964, 20). In line with this, only negations may be predicated of the One¹.

Although the One is prior to the duality of subject and object, and hence cannot know itself, it is self-aware. This non-conceptual self-contemplation results in the begetting of the Intelligence which contains the Ideas, the archetypes of the multiplicity of beings which make up the cosmos. Plotinus regarded this repository of form as the highest being. The Intelligence, in turn, gives rise to the Soul, which is the demiurge and governor of the material cosmos, and contains the souls of all creatures as the Intelligence contains the Ideas. These three, then, the primal hypostases, constitute what is essential in all reality. In sharp contrast to the radical materialism of the Manichees, Plotinus regarded all reality as spiritual (Knowles 1962, 23).

While Plotinus was prepared to recognise the necessity of the material world, he could not affirm its goodness. Goodness is a function of proximity to the One. Thus the human individual is essentially a soul with governorship of a material body. However, the presence of that soul within the human body is the result of a fall into individuality. In their present state human beings are microcosmic in the sense that they present in their spiritual life an image of the cosmic dialectic of descent into multiplicity and return to the One. The negative implications for life in this world are well summed up in Porphyry's comment that "Plotinus seemed ashamed of having a body" (cited by O'Brien 1964, 14 n.3).

For Plotinus the good life was defined by the soul's

return to unity with the One by a process of intellectual purgation. Augustine's identification of this with the Christian life led to its adoption by western Christianity as the method of introspection (or, in Christian mystical circles, the doctrine of ascent to the divine). In its Plotinian form it consists of three essential stages. The first is apophatic: a separation of the soul from the multiplicity of the material world, a drawing inwards towards the centre or apex of the soul (Plotinus, Enn. 5, 9 [5], 1). This is followed by a cataphatic stage of meditation upon the unity of the Intelligible. The final stage is ekstasis: a contemplative self-transcendence of intellect resulting in communion with the One.

2. THE TRIUNE GOD ACCORDING TO AUGUSTINE

We turn now to Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity. His writings on this subject, and particularly his major work De trinitate, have for centuries been virtually definitive for the western Christian understanding of the Trinity. They have also been widely interpreted as strongly monistic in their tendency. This interpretation is well summarised by Paul Tillich, who insists that Augustine,

is more interested in the unity of God than in the different hypostaseis, the three personae, in God. He expresses this in terms which make it clear he is one of those responsible for our present-day inclination to apply the term persona to God, instead of applying it individually to the Father, Son, and Spirit. Of course, Augustine never became heterodox in this

respect, although he leaned, as did the West generally, toward a Monarchian view. That he was inclined in this direction is evident by the analogy he sees between the trinity and the personal life of man. He says: "Father, Son, and Spirit are analogous to amans (he who loves), quod amatur (that which is loved), and amor (the power to love)." Or: "The trinity is analogous to memory, intelligence, and will." This means that he uses the trinity in order to give analogically a description of God as a person. Since God is a person, and that means a unity, all acts of God toward the outside (ad extra) are always acts of the whole trinity, even the act of the incarnation. (Tillich 1968, 116f.)

Although Tillich clearly regards this as the orthodox view of God many contemporary theologians have raised questions about the validity of such a tendency to uni-personalism within what claims to be a Christian theological system. It is widely believed that, by suppressing the personal distinctions within the Godhead, Augustine has reduced Christianity to another monotheism².

He is not without advocates to defend him against this charge³ and would himself have strenuously denied it. Whatever the apparent tendency of the body of his trinitarian theology, it is bracketed by assertions of the genuineness of the trinitarian distinctions and the full personality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, for example he asks,

who would venture to say either that the one God, which is the Trinity itself, or that the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit is not living, or is lacking in perception or understanding; or that in that nature by which they are proclaimed to be mutually equal, any one of them is mortal, or corruptible, or changeable, or corporeal? Or who would deny that any one there is the most powerful, the most just, the most beautiful, the best, and the most blessed? (Trin. 15.5.7)

However this raises another difficulty. If the Trinity itself is personal in the same sense as the persons, it is

not clear why we speak of a Trinity at all rather than a quaternity. It is clear from the above that a closer examination of his understanding of the term Person is necessary.

Before turning to that examination, however, it is worth commenting on one line of defence of the Augustinian position. It is sometimes said that he adopts an essentially empirical approach in which his trinitarian reflections are controlled throughout by the content of Scripture. Thus, it is urged, he rejects the Cappadocians' social analogies for the Trinity on the basis that Scripture presents the human individual as imago dei (Hodgson 1943, 146). However, his individualistic exegesis of Gen. 1:26 was something of a novelty. Prior to that, the imago dei was usually treated in more social terms. His search for the image of God within the individual soul recalls Plotinus' view of the soul as microcosm. What appears at first sight to be a purely exegetical decision may, in fact, owe more to his philosophical context than to the demands of Scripture.

But, quite apart from this consideration, it is doubtful whether the case for treating De trinitate as an empirical study of Scripture can be maintained. Augustine does not use Scripture as his starting point. On the contrary, he begins and ends with the credal statements adopted by the Council of Constantinople. It is an exposition of orthodox catholic truth, not of Scripture. The structure of De trinitate makes this quite clear: he

begins with a statement of orthodox trinitarianism (Book 1); he then expounds that statement with the aid of Scripture (Books 1-4); this is followed by a metaphysical reformulation of the doctrine (Books 5-7); then he turns to the task of clarifying this statement with the aid of analogies drawn from creation (Books 8-14); and he concludes by returning to the creed and affirming the incomprehensibility of the God to whom it bears witness (Book 15).

(a) The Oneness of God

The starting point of his attempt to explain the meaning of trinitarian discourse is his assumption of the unity of the Godhead, that "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit constitute a divine unity of one and the same substance in an indivisible equality" (Trin. 1.4.7; cf., 5.8.9, 5.9.10, 7.5.10). As we have already noted, he found it easy to equate the triune God of Christianity with the primal hypostases of Neoplatonism. Furthermore, the philosophical categories and even the methodology of De trinitate are those of Neoplatonism (Burnaby 1955, 21)⁴. Thus his Hellenistic background is partly responsible for the presupposition that the divine essence is unitary and exerts a powerful influence on what he feels able to predicate of God.

However, his understanding of ultimate reality as essence marks a significant departure from this background. The Nicene insistence on the homoousios also requires that

we take the unity of God seriously. And it is surely out of deference to catholic orthodoxy that he starts from the one divine essence rather than from a unity which transcends all categories. Nevertheless, his acceptance of Hellenistic categories clearly affects his understanding of the divine unity. Thus, for Augustine, absoluteness, immutability, and simplicity are self-evident corollaries of the concept of divine unity.

As wielded by Augustine, this cluster of concepts became a formidable weapon against contemporary trinitarian heresies. The concept of divine simplicity (adopted from Plotinus) led immediately to the dictum that God is his attributes (Civ. 11.10). Any relaxation of this insistence on simplicity would result in modalism (Hodgson 1943, 151), particularly in a theology which stressed the divine unity as strongly as did Augustine's. At the same time the concept of absoluteness entails absolute unity of substance (Trin. 6.3.5). This insistence on the divine unity implied a radical opposition to any form of subordinationism (Trin. 8.2.1).

Central to his understanding of the divine unity was the concept of immutability. Two implications of this are particularly noteworthy. If God is immutable then none of his attributes may be regarded as accidental (Trin. 5.4.5): this has important implications for his understanding of the divine Persons and forms the basis for his preference for 'essence' over 'substance'. It also implies that God's relations with his creatures must be immutable (Trin. 1.1.2,

15.13.22): as a result we are faced with a severe problem of how to interpret scriptural witness to divine activity in creation.

This starting point leads directly to his particular formulation of the trinitarian question. The unity of God is not a problem in itself, but it creates a severe problem for anyone wishing to adhere to the scriptural witness and the Nicene statement of trinitarian orthodoxy. For Augustine, the problem was how this One could be spoken of as Three.

(b) The One as three Persons

Thus the scriptural testimony to and orthodox affirmation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constituted a serious challenge to Augustine (the more so since he had such a high regard for both Scripture and tradition). A major task of De trinitate was to answer this challenge. Disregarding the Cappadocian interpretation of Nicene orthodoxy (Trin. 5.8.20), Augustine set about tackling the problem by examining the nature of grammatical predicates⁵. Drawing on his experience as a rhetor he classified predicates into three types: accidental, substantial, and relative.

Can the personal distinctions or, more generally, the divine attributes be regarded as accidents? He could eliminate this possibility because it contradicted the dictum of divine simplicity. To say that anything pertaining to the divine is accidental is to assert that in

some respect God is not his attributes. Since God is revealed through his attributes this would reintroduce the possibility of modalism⁶.

Augustine, like the Arians, had no difficulty in rejecting the above option. But what about the Arians' own solution to the problem, namely, that the personal distinctions and other divine attributes were substantial? This yields two very different understandings of triunity, both of which were unacceptable to Augustine. In either case, the divine Persons would have to be understood as three distinct substances. If this were combined with a clear ontological distinction between the divine and the created, the only possible interpretation of triunity would be as a voluntary association of three gods: tritheism⁷.

Alternatively, and more commonly in the philosophical milieu of the Fathers, such a clear ontological distinction might not be made. In this case the persons might be regarded as members of an ontological hierarchy forming a continuous chain of being from the unoriginate source of all being down to the lowest creatures of our world: subordinationism. This approach to the concept of God was developed by the Arians from an important strand of the early patristic tradition, namely, the Christian Hellenism of the Apologists and Origen. In reality it is a covert form of pantheism: asserting as it does a continuity of being between creator and creature.

Augustine, of course, had a very strong sense of the qualitative difference between creator and creature which

made it impossible for him to adopt the subordinationist approach⁸. For him, any suggestion that the personal distinctions within the Godhead might be substantial could only lead to tritheism. However, this did not constitute a blanket ban on substantial predication in relation to God. He allowed substantial predicates to be used of God provided that they were applied to the Trinity as a whole.

Dissatisfied with all these options, Augustine made a counterproposal based on his classification of grammatical predicates and inspired once again by Plotinus (Enn. 6.1.6ff.). He suggested that the personal distinctions be regarded as relative rather than substantial or accidental. Thus the Persons of the Godhead are constituted by eternal mutually reciprocal relations within the divine unity.

This counterproposal afforded him a viable basis for distinguishing between the persons: the nature of the relations themselves. Four such relations are suggested in the course of his treatment of the subject: begetting, and being begotten; giving, and being given. The Father begets and the Son is begotten: the two Persons are distinguished by this mutual relationship. The Spirit is introduced into this perfectly balanced mutuality of generation by means of the concept of procession (or being given). Thus the Spirit is constituted by being given to the Son by the Father and by being returned to the Father by the Son (e.g., Trin. 5.14.15).

In order to reduce these four relations to the three necessary to define a Trinity, giving must be predicated of

both the Father and the Son. Thus Augustine's understanding of the Trinity entails the disputed filioque clause. Drawing on one of his psychological analogies, Augustine could then describe the Spirit as the bond of love or unity⁹ between Father and Son. In Augustine's opinion, this need not threaten the principium of the Father: the Father remains the ultimate source of the Trinity (Vera relig. 55.112).

The widespread criticisms of Augustine mostly hinge on this way of distinguishing the Persons. Does he equate the Persons with their relations? If so, it becomes difficult to maintain that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are genuinely personal in the modern sense.

Hodgson 1943 and Burnaby 1955 maintain that he does not make such an equation. However, whatever Augustine may have asserted (e.g., Trin. 15.5.7, 15.19.36) the logic of his approach does appear to require such an equation. The simplicity dictum (that God is his attributes) applies indifferently to the Godhead and the Persons. Since the personal distinctions are the defining attributes of the Persons it follows that the Father is his Fatherhood (the act of begetting), the Son is his Sonship (the act of being begotten), and the Spirit is his Givenness (the act of being given) (Mackey 1983, 156). Thus he is often credited with originating the western tendency to equate the Persons with their relations (Kelly 1968, 274). The result is clear in Aquinas' definition of the divine Persons: "'person' in God signifies a relation subsisting in the divine nature" (cited

by Mackey 1983, 156).

In spite of his orthodox starting point and conclusions, he seems reluctant to distinguish between the Persons. He treats trinitarian discourse as an unfortunate necessity created in order that we "might be able to speak in some way about that which we cannot fully express in any way" (Trin. 7.4.7; cf. 5.9.10). Nowhere is this clearer than in his use of the formula opera ad extra trinitatis indivisa sunt. The formula was designed to protect the complete unity of operation, action and will of the Godhead. However, in keeping with his radical opposition to subordinationism, he places such an extreme interpretation on the formula that the 'outward' activities of the persons of the Trinity become indistinguishable. Thus Mackey can comment that this formula "is now so much in possession that it makes all detectable means of distinguishing the 'persons' suspect" (Mackey 1983, 158).

Where Scripture is silent the best we may do is to appropriate specific attributes to a particular person, i.e., while recognising that it is true of all the persons we are permitted to say that it is particularly appropriate to one. Any encounter between the human individual and God is always with the Trinity as a whole. Thus Augustine can say,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, being of one and the same substance, God the Creator, the omnipotent Trinity, work together inseparably. But this cannot be represented inseparably by a creature that is quite dissimilar, and especially one that is corporeal. Thus the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit cannot be named by our voices ... except by giving to each one

its own proper interval of time ...And just as when I mention my memory, my understanding, and my will each name refers indeed to a specific thing, but yet each one has been produced by all three so ... the whole Trinity together produced the voice of the Father, the flesh of the Son, and the dove of the Holy Spirit although each is referred to one particular person. (Trin. 4.21.30)

It follows that it is not possible to determine, except on the basis of what Scripture asserts, whether Father, Son, or Holy Spirit has become incarnate. There is no intrinsic relation between the trinitarian structure of God's activity in the world and the Trinity itself. This is reflected in Augustine's final candidate for the status of most perfect created vestige of the Trinity. He opts for the psychological triad of memory, understanding and will in the act of contemplating things eternal (the transcendent being of the triune God) in preference to the same triad in the act of contemplating the historical Christ event. There follows an implicit devaluation of the incarnation in Augustinian theology.

If the creature can only ever encounter the Trinity as a whole and appropriation is no more than a theological convention, it is a natural development to treat God as unipersonal. Augustine's argument clearly points in that direction though he draws back from the conclusion (Trin. 7.6.11). Furthermore, if the Persons are equally and identically related to the Godhead, they become irrelevant to the divinity (Jenson 1982b, 118f.). The logical conclusion is the practical monotheism of which Rahner, among others, complains (Rahner 1970, 10).

We may conclude that, in order to evade Arian

accusations of tritheism Augustine has, in effect, suppressed the distinction between persons and relations.

(c) Augustine's use of analogies

The second half of De trinitate, in which Augustine examines a range of creaturely triads in a search for analogies for the Holy Trinity, offers important insights into his understanding of the divine Persons. Since this search is rooted in the belief that creatures in some sense participate in the triune God, it is also of particular relevance to the present study.

It is clear that, whatever use was made of this approach by subsequent theologians, Augustine himself never envisaged it as an exercise in natural theology. On the contrary he presents it as a case of faith seeking self-understanding. The starting point is orthodox belief in the Trinity combined with Neoplatonic belief in the participation of every creature in the absolute goodness of the triune God. In his own words:

the earth is good by the height of its mountains, the moderate elevation of its hills, and the evenness of its fields; and good is the farm that is pleasant and fertile; ... and good are the animals, animate bodies; ... and good is the heaven with its own sun, moon, and stars; ... This is good and that is good; take away this and that, and see good itself if you can; so you will see God who is good not by another good, but is the good of every good. (Trin. 8.3.4)

The point is that something of the character of God may be discerned by a process of abstraction from concrete reality. The universals which undergird created reality are closer to the creator than the particulars. In spite

of his assertions that faith is here seeking understanding there does seem to be an element of natural theology about this procedure. This process of abstraction is, in fact, part of the Neoplatonic method of introspection which Augustine uses unquestioningly.

The search for explanatory analogies by a method that directs one inwards (on the assumption that there is a hierarchical relationship between God, souls, and matter, cf. Vera Rel. 3.3, Trin. 12.9.14) leads to an ascending series of psychological triads. It is important to remember that Augustine does not intend these as alternative analogies for the divine Trinity. At this stage he is merely searching for triadic structures within the human psyche on the assumption that it is the image of God: that one or more of these triads may provide us with an appropriate analogy for the trinitarian life of God. Indeed their real importance for Augustine appears to lie not so much in their status as approximate models for the Trinity as in their capacity to describe the way in which the soul may return to God (O'Donovan 1980, 75). As we have already noted, the analogy which he finally chooses is the activity of memory, understanding, and will as they combine in the contemplation of the essential Trinity.

Augustine concludes his study of the doctrine of the Trinity with a recognition of the inadequacy of analogies for God. This recognition is sometimes taken as evidence that Augustine was unhappy with the unipersonalistic implications of his analogies (e.g., Hodgson 1943). There

is some suggestion of this in Augustine's statement that

the Father is His own love, in the same manner as He is His own understanding and His own memory. Behold these three, therefore: memory, understanding, love or the will in that highest and unchangeable essence, which is God, and these three are not the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but the Father alone.

And because the Son also is wisdom begotten from wisdom, as neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit understands for Him, but He Himself understands for Himself, so neither does the Father remember for Him, nor does the Holy Spirit love for Him, but He remembers for Himself and loves for Himself. ... The Holy Spirit, too, because He is wisdom proceeding from wisdom, does not have the Father as His memory, and the Son as His understanding, and Himself as love; for He would not be wisdom if the one remembered for Him, and the other understood for Him, and He Himself only loved for Himself. (Irin. 15.7.12)

However, this intimation, that the unipersonal nature of the analogies may be misleading, is isolated. Augustine's main reservation with these triadic structures is that they do not offer an exhaustive definition of the soul; they are only parts of the soul. In contrast to this God is this Trinity of persons just as he is his attributes. Thus these structures can never offer an adequate analogy. His ultimate conclusion is consonant with his Neoplatonic heritage, namely, that God is essentially incomprehensible.

The effect of this approach on Christian attitudes to nature has been largely negative. Although Augustine assents to the goodness of the created order, both human and nonhuman, his approval of the method of introspection as a tool of theological reflection undermines belief in the goodness of the material creation. His use of it has elevated the participation of the human soul in the divine

at the expense the nonhuman creation (and even human corporeality). Thus, he has encouraged the development of a narrow understanding of the human as rational soul, and perpetuated, in Christian theology, a hierarchy of being which sets the spiritual above, and sometimes even in opposition to, the material.

(d) Implications for divine activity

As was pointed out above, Augustine's interpretation of the opera ad extra principle was so strong as to render the activity of the Persons indistinguishable. The resultant practical unitarianism leads inevitably to a monotheistic understanding of creation which contrasts sharply with Greek Patristic efforts to speak of the divine economy in trinitarian terms. Indeed, Augustine himself recognised that, to be faithful to the evidence of Scripture, such an effort was necessary (Vera Rel. 7.13, Civ. 11.24). And he followed the lead of earlier fathers in recognising allusions to the Trinity in the Genesis account of creation (e.g., Gen. ad lit. 1.6.12, 2.6.12). However, one suspects that he pursued this largely because of the support it afforded for the Neoplatonic theory of the Word (the Intelligence) as the repository of created forms (cf. Trin. 4.1.3).

In any case, the monistic pressure exerted by his trinitarianism placed severe difficulties in the way of a serious attempt to develop a trinitarian account of creation. The difficulties are well illustrated by his

tortuous attempts to speak of the incarnation as the work of the whole Trinity while maintaining that it was proper for the Son to become incarnate (e.g., Trin. 15.11.20). Perhaps the clearest example of the difficulties facing Augustine is his treatment of the baptism of Jesus where he wants to maintain, on the one hand that only the Father spoke, only the Son was incarnate, and only the Spirit descended while, on the other hand, he insists that the voice of the Father, the flesh of the Son, and the dove of the Spirit were each the work of the entire Trinity.

Augustine's way of reconciling these apparently irreconcilable statements was to opt for a doctrine of appropriation. Thus activities which are, in fact, the work of the Trinity (as a single and indivisible agent) are treated as if they were activities of a specific Person because their particular character is appropriate to that Person's place within the Trinity. Or, as Kelly puts it, "since each of the Persons possesses the divine nature in a particular manner, it is proper to attribute to each of Them, in the external operation of the Godhead, the role which is appropriate to Him in virtue of His origin" (Kelly 1968, 273f.). The result is that any intrinsic relationship between the essential and the economic Trinities is lost, and the latter is downgraded in favour of the former.

Finally, the combination of Augustine's practical unitarianism with his stress on the immutability of God must create doubts about the reality of active divine involvement in creation. His way of defining the divine

essence in terms of absoluteness and impassibility (in line with Hellenistic presuppositions) certainly seems to preclude the active involvement of God in creation and redemption (Pelikan 1971, 296). This appears to be confirmed by his stress on the equivocality of the concepts of divine and creaturely activity (Gen. ad lit. 1.18.36). In order to reconcile this with Scripture, he resorts to using the hierarchy of being as a hierarchy of agency: God does not act directly on creatures but acts by means of mediating spirits (including human souls). Thus,

He diffuses Himself through all things by certain most orderly movements of the creature, first the spiritual, then the material, and He uses all according to the unchangeable pleasure of His own counsel, whether incorporeal or corporeal things, whether rational or irrational spirits, whether the good by His grace or the wicked by their own will.

But as grosser and lower bodies are directed in a certain order by subtler and stronger bodies, so all bodies are directed by the spirit of life: the irrational spirit of life by the rational spirit of life, the truant and sinful rational spirit of life by the rational, pious, and just spirit of life, and the latter by its Creator, from whom, through whom, and in whom it has also been created and established. Thus the will of God is the first and the highest cause of all the forms and movements of the corporeal being. (Trin. 3.4.9).

3. AUGUSTINE'S VIEW OF PROVIDENCE

Like his treatment of the Trinity, Augustine's doctrine of providence has proved to be of seminal importance for the western catholic tradition. Prior to Augustine, Christian accounts of divine providence had focussed mainly on God's

providential ordering of the natural world. In line with the Stoic roots of the concept, interest was concentrated on static order and harmony (Gilkey 1976, 161). With Augustine we see a dramatic shift in emphasis to God's providential oversight of human history: providence comes to be related much more closely to the divine purpose and, thus, is determined by the doctrines of divine election and eschatology. Gilkey argues that his change of emphasis has determined subsequent understandings of providence in the following ways,

(1) providence expresses the sovereignty of God over historical (and natural) events and so a sovereign or ruling action fulfilling God's final purposes for his creation. ... (2) God's providential activity includes sovereignty over the "external" or objective historical actions and events, individual and social, in which all human beings live as well as sovereignty in various ways over the ordinary decisions of human beings. ... (3) In his providence God does not "work" in history as one external cause among other causes ... but always in and through the various dynamic factors, including freedom, effective in all historical change. (4) Providence works through, not against human freedom, through our voluntary willing, and so even through our sinful willing. ... (5) Because of providence, there is no fate in human historical existence. ... (6) Providence is active both in the course of an individual's life and in the course of history generally--and in both areas of activity what the divine providence is doing is directly related to the electing will and the eschatological goal of God's sovereign rule. (Gilkey 1976, 161-62)

Four features of Augustine's doctrine of providence are of particular relevance to the present study: the notion of a hierarchy of agency referred to above, the universal scope of divine providence, its eschatological determination, and its pervasive anthropocentricity.

(a) Hierarchy of agency

The hierarchy of agency described in such passages as Civ. 5.9, Trin. 3.4.9 and 3.5.11 is closely related to Augustine's understanding of God's creative activity. God creates by expressing all things simultaneously and immutably in the divine Word (Trin. 4.1.3). Augustine interprets the beginning of Gen. 1:1 as the Word of Jn 1:1, thus transposing the problem of divine origination of the cosmos from the metaphysics of time to the metaphysics of causes (Gilson 1961, 197). Contrary to Santmire's opinion, this lends itself to an interpretation of the cosmos in primarily static spatial terms.

God's activity in relation to creation is understood entirely in terms of this primordial expression of the cosmos. God acts via the eternal and immutable reasons residing in the divine Word. In spite of this very strong orientation towards the primordial past, Augustine does not deny the appearance of change and occurrence within the created order. He reconciles this with the primordial ordering of all things by means of a doctrine of seminal reasons (Trin. 3.8.13): causal 'seeds' embedded in the created order at the beginning, and brought to fruition in due time by the Holy Spirit¹⁰.

In addition to the presence of these seminal reasons, God may be said to act through the secondary agents He has created. It should be noted, that Augustine cannot conceive of corporeal agents since cause, for him, entails volition (and he doubts whether irrational creatures can be

said to have wills). His own summary of the hierarchy of causation is as follows:

the cause which is cause only, and not effect, is God. But other causes are also effects, as are all created spirits and in particular the rational spirits. Corporeal causes, which are more acted upon than active, are not to be counted among efficient causes, since all they can achieve is what is achieved through them by the wills of spirits. (Civ. 5.9)

His insistence that God's providence is mediated by finite causes (Markus 1970, 14, 86-92) is highly relevant for a theology of nature. Divine causality is distinguished from finite creaturely causality by the fact that God acts in and through the latter (Trin. 3.3; Gilkey 1976, 166). Thus Augustine sees God as the ultimate ground of both being and causation (Civ. 5.8, 12.3; Trin. 3.6.8; Sorabji 1983, 302-05). The mediate nature of this activity becomes the basis for a justification of God in the face of evil occurrences (Vera Rel. 40.75). It also enables him to integrate miracles into the natural order (Trin. 3.5.11).

This lack of distinction between God's activity in nature and the signs and wonders attested to in Scripture has resulted in two diametrically opposed tendencies in European thought. For Augustine and his theological successors it meant that the natural order was at root miraculous. The effect of Enlightenment secularism has been to stand this miraculous view of nature on its head: resulting either in naturalistic explanations of miracles, or in an understanding of divine activity as continuous with and completely specified by natural causation.

One important effect of treating divine causality in

this manner is a tendency to dissociate divine activity from created reality. God does not act directly upon the biophysical universe but only through the mediation of created spirits. As we shall see later, this tendency to insulate the spiritual from the corporeal extends, in Augustine, even to the human creature.

Another consequence of this hierarchical view of causality, when it appears in conjunction with a fundamentally impersonal, substantialist model of ultimate reality, is that agency can be understood only as the exercise of power. Thus, the Creator-creature relationship is best expressed as a master-slave relationship: "Creator ... signifies a relation to the creature, as lord does to slave" (Trin. 5.13.14).

(b) Universal scope

The universality of divine providence is a corollary of the universality of God's creative activity. Thus Augustine affirms that God's providence extends to such ephemeral creatures as cloud formations (Gen. ad lit. 5.21.42, Trin. 3.5.11). Of course his motive is to ensure the absoluteness of God's sovereignty: God is the only ultimate cause. In spite of this, however, such statements also affirm God's sustenance of the nonhuman dimensions of creation (Gilkey 1976, 166; Gen. ad lit. 5.23.45).

God maintains the entire biophysical creation within primordially ordained limits (Gen. ad lit. 2.6.14, 3.12.18-19). This lex aeterna is the sum of the eternal reasons

residing in the divine Word: the second Person of the Trinity lays down the fundamental structure of the cosmos (Ritschl 1976, 73).

(c) Eschatological determination

Most important for subsequent attitudes to nature, however, was Augustine's insistence that God's activity in nature is expressive of the divine sovereignty and determined by the divine purpose. In other words, God's activity in nature is to be understood in terms of his primordial election (in Augustine's view, of the Church) and his eschatological goal.

The latter emphasis is particularly important in Augustine's theology. However, his understanding of the eschaton is that it is characterised by a supra-historical participation in the divine eternity. Thus O'Connell can say, "no thought could claim Augustinian fatherhood unless it remained in some genuine sense faithful to his other-worldly stress" (O'Connell 1978, 144). Human history is the sea which, according to the Book of Revelation, ceases to exist at the eschatological transformation of the heavens and the earth (Civ. 20.15-16).

Experience, and the testimony of Scripture, forced Augustine to admit that God operates through time and history to bring about the transformation of souls. However, in line with classical thought, he still defined time in terms of motion, change and decay (Vera relig. 4.6, Util. 17.35). Thus he could only contrast it with the

changeless perfection of the eternal eschaton (Civ. 11.6).

In later years he inclined to view such change in a more positive light than in his youth. Thus,

these creatures have received their mode of being by the will of their Creator, whose purpose is that they should bring to perfection the beauty of the lower parts of the universe by their alternation and succession in the passage of the seasons; and this is a beauty in its own kind, finding its place among the constituent parts of this world. (Civ. 12.4)

But while he was prepared to admit that change and decay were in accord with God's will, he could not bring himself to admit that they were also proper to human nature. The decay of irrational natures was divinely ordained but the decay of the latter could only be due to human disobedience. In the end, he could not recognise that change, as such, was a good. This reluctance to admit the goodness of temporality, combined with his supra-historical understanding of the eschaton, could only result in him viewing time as an instrument of providence rather than, in any sense, an end in itself (Civ. 11.4,6, Conf. 11.13-14; Pelikan 1971, 280-84).

It is not surprising that with such an instrumental view of time, he should also have an instrumental view of history. Human history may be the stage for the drama of sin and redemption but the conclusion of the drama is not set upon that stage. The telos of history lies in eternity (Civ. 18.49, 20.9, 21.25). Furthermore, its orientation towards the eschaton means that providence is focussed on the church and the salvation of individuals rather than on history as such (Gilkey 1976, 165).

(d) Anthropocentricity

Augustine's understanding of the eschaton clearly implies an anthropocentric orientation. This is quite explicit in his earlier works. Providence is "what God has done for the salvation of the human race, renewing and restoring it unto eternal life" (Vera relig. 7.13). Its primary function is to recall "to its true and essential nature whatever manifests defect" (Vera relig. 17.33; cf. 41.79). However, he makes no attempt to draw out any implications for creation as a whole, being content to restrict providence to the recalling of souls to their true natures. If there is a development in his doctrine of providence it is not in the direction of placing more importance on divine care for the nonhuman but, rather, in the direction of putting more emphasis on the role of providence in relation to the Church. And, if history exists in the divine economy only to enable the trans-historical transformation of souls, either individually or corporately (Gilkey 1976, 165; Markus 1970, pp. 82ff.), how much more so is this the case for nature.

4. AUGUSTINE'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE MATERIAL CREATION

Augustine the Christian theologian departed radically from the outright hostility towards the material world which would have characterised Augustine the 'hearer' of the Manichees. However, this reaction against his heretical

youth is a far cry from the "triumph of the ecological motif" which Paul Santmire discerns in his theology (Santmire 1985, 55-73). A more realistic assessment would be that of R. A. Markus who argues that the nonhuman creation as such was never a central issue in Augustine's thought, and that it appears only under exegetical pressure (Markus 1967, 395). One might add that polemical pressures also played an important part in making Augustine attend to this issue¹¹.

(a) Creatio ex nihilo

At the heart of Augustine's polemic against the Manichees was his affirmation of creatio ex nihilo. Contrary to their belief in the corporeality of God, this doctrine affirmed the existence of an ontological gulf between the divine and the mutable (Gilson 1961, 189).

Peter Brown comments of Manichaeism that "No religious system ... had ever treated the visible world so drastically, and with such literalism, as an externalization of an inner, spiritual conflict" (Brown 1967, 56). This treatment of the cosmos as a reification of the eternal conflict between good and evil, and the consequent denial of absolute sovereignty to the Good, was also a target for criticism from the perspective of creatio ex nihilo. Augustine attacked the Platonic myth of the demiurge (and, by implication, all forms of cosmic dualism including Manichaeism) in the following terms, "When they say that there is something which God omnipotent did not

create ... they so far deny that God is omnipotent" (Fid. et symb. 2.2).

However, in spite of his rejection of Manichaeism, Augustine tends to ignore the goodness of the created order (which is a corollary of the absolute sovereignty of a good Creator). He admits the biblical insistence on the goodness of creation but does not permit it to undermine Neoplatonic doubts about the goodness of matter¹². At best, the biblical teaching assured him that even the material creation played a part in God's good purposes.

In line with this failure to let the Biblical witness criticise the Neoplatonic view of matter is an apparent blindness to the tension between the biblical doctrine of creation and the Neoplatonic theory of emanation. Instead, he presents creatio ex nihilo as entirely consistent with the Neoplatonic conception of God as the source of being, and his use of Neoplatonic categories effectively suppresses the tension between them (Knowles 1962, 39).

(b) Participation in form

For Augustine, creaturely being entails participation in form (Vera relig. 11.21-22). Since God is His attributes, participation clearly distinguishes divine from created being (Trin. 5.10.11). Indeed participation in form may be said to be definitive of creaturely existence. Thus chaos is the absence of form, and the nihil from which God created all things is no ontological power set over against Him but, rather, the absence of even the capacity to

receive form (Vera relig. 18.36). He confirms this by insisting on the simultaneous creation of matter and form (Gen. ad lit. 1.15.29).

This is consistent with his appropriation of Neo-Platonic emanationism in the theory of creation by the divine Word (Gen. ad lit. 1.3.8). According to this theory, all finite possibilities were eternally and immutably expressed in the generation of the second Person of the Trinity. Contrary to Neoplatonism, the transition from these eternal reasons to created reality does not take place by way of a necessary self-diffusion of the Good but by a free act of the divine will. God has eternally chosen that the capacity to resemble or participate in these eternal reasons should exist 'outside' the Godhead.

As we have already noted, Augustine took over the concept of a great chain of being from classical thought. Thus he regarded all finite essences as arranged hierarchically on the basis of the inequality of their participation in Being (Gilson 1961, 210). Those beings which participate most fully in Being will clearly resemble it most closely. Since Being itself is immutable, the degree to which a being is subject to change is a natural measure of its place in the hierarchy. It follows that spiritual beings (which are subject only to temporal change) must be higher than corporeal beings (which are also subject to spatial change) (Gen. ad lit. 8.20.39).

Augustine regarded this hierarchy of being as equivalent to a hierarchy of agency or power. In the same

way, he saw it as a hierarchy of goodness: "The highest form is the highest good, and the lowest form is the lowest good" (Vera relig. 18.35). This was because, like the Neoplatonists, he equated being and goodness: "All things are to be praised for the reason that they exist; for what exists is for that reason alone good" (Lib. arb. 3.7.21).

In spite of the apparently world-affirming nature of the preceding quotation, this doctrine that existence is goodness has actually had a pernicious effect on western Christian attitudes to the material creation. Implicit in it is the doctrine that 'higher' existents are better than 'lower'. Thus spiritual beings are better than corporeal beings; eternal beings are better than temporal beings. The material aspects of creation may not be actively evil¹³ but they are without doubt the least good parts of creation (Nat. bon. 18-19; Conf. 12.2). This belief that spiritual realities are better, and therefore more to be desired, than corporeal realities constitutes a fundamental part of Augustine's spirituality: the contemptus mundi.

On the other hand, the equation of existence with participation in the eternal reasons clearly implies that they bear some resemblance to that in which they participate. Thus all things, to the extent that they participate in the divine Word, do resemble the triune God. This resemblance enables Augustine to accept the biblical affirmation of the goodness of all created reality (Civ. 11.24). Furthermore, it allows him to recognise the existence of order and beauty even in the material creation

(Vera relig. 40.76). This resemblance further suggests that traces of the divine reality exist within creation: the vestigia trinitatis. These traces can become the basis for the contemplation of God¹⁴ (Trin. 6.10.12).

(c) A deterministic cosmos

Augustine clearly regarded the biophysical universe as subject to primordial ordering. The patterns of creation, the orders of creation have been laid down from the Beginning. Dietrich Ritschl sees in Augustine's treatment of the divine ordering of creation a Christianisation of the Stoic concept of fatum (Ritschl 1976, 72). This is, in essence, a static and deterministic understanding of the cosmos.

Evidence that the nonhuman is not merely ordered but determined by God may be adduced from Augustine's interpretation of "according to their kinds" (Gen. 1:11,12, 21,24,25). He takes this to mean that God has ordained that the characteristics of the first parents will be transmitted without defect to all succeeding generations (Gen. ad lit. 3.12.19), and it contrasts with the freedom which God has bestowed upon the human creature (Gen. ad lit. 3.12.20). This clearly entails the fixity of nonhuman species¹⁵.

Contrary to this view, Santmire, amongst others, has attempted to show that Augustine not only saw nature in historical (and, hence, dynamic) terms but that he had a rudimentary conception of evolution. Santmire bases his argument on Augustine's theory of the rationes seminales¹⁶.

However, quite apart from the fact that Augustine introduced this theory for exegetical reasons¹⁷, it entails that all apparent novelty has, in fact, been implicit in creation from the beginning (Gen. ad lit. 5.20.41). It, thus, has more in common with the Hegelian concept of development than with evolution as commonly understood today.

Finally, it is worth noting that such a static view of the cosmos is consistent with a doctrine of God articulated in terms of divine substance and a doctrine of providence determined by a supra-historical eschaton. If God is substance in the Hellenistic sense, the highest good is immutable: static and lifeless. Similarly, because the telos of created reality lay beyond history, Augustine was unable to envisage any real transformation within history or nature¹⁸.

(d) The purpose of the nonhuman

What is the purpose of the nonhuman creation? What is its telos, its fulfilment?

Santmire argues that Augustine believed that the material creation existed primarily to be beautiful and to glorify God: "the most fundamental telos of the whole creation is beauty, and the glorification of the God who wills such a magnificent community of being, every part of which has its own divinely validated integrity" (Santmire 1985, 61). However, this ignores the fact that, for Augustine, sensual beauty was merely a means to a still

higher end, namely, the contemplation of the rational.

The hierarchical streak in Augustine's thought means that the lower exists to serve the higher; the telos of the lower exists in such service. Thus, "Since the creature ... is either equal or inferior to us, we must use the inferior for God and enjoy the equal, but in God" (Trin. 9.8.13). He was quite unable to conceive of nature having order or beauty for its own sake. And, since the human creature is the highest created being in the material realm, it follows that the sub-human creation exists only to serve him.

5. THE HUMAN AND THE NONHUMAN

In this final section we shall examine some implications of Augustine's anthropology and spirituality for his attitude to the natural world.

(a) Imago Dei

That humankind is, in some sense, the image of God is fundamental to Christian anthropologies. Augustine's anthropology is no exception. However, the different ways in which Christian theologians have answered the question, "In what sense are human beings images of God?" has led to a great diversity of anthropologies, and a corresponding diversity of answers to the question of the relation of the human to the nonhuman.

Augustine's answer is straightforward. The human soul¹⁹ is the image of God:

His image ... is man, in that whereby He is superior to other animals, namely, in reason and understanding, and whatever else can be said of the rational or intellectual soul that pertains to that thing which is called the mind or animus. (Trin. 15.1.1; cf. Gen. ad lit. 3.20.30, Trin. 15.8.14)

The spiritual dimension of humankind is that which participates most fully in, and hence resembles most closely, the divine reality. Augustine's hierarchical perspective is quite consistent in picking out the soul as the image of God.

It follows that the soul must also be regarded as superior to the material creation (Gen. ad lit. 8.23.44, Trin. 8.3.4). Thus, it is natural that Augustine should associate the concept of imago dei very closely with the dominium terrae enunciated in the same verse (Gen. 1:26). By virtue of its possession of reason, the human soul is rightful lord of the irrational creation (Gen. ad lit. 3.20.30), and the glory of the world (Trin. 15.8.14, Vera relig. 28.51).

Augustine develops the concept of human dominion over the created order by analogy with divine sovereignty (Gen. ad lit. 7.19.25) with potentially serious implications for the reality of human action in the material world. However, his motive appears to be to allay doubts about divine agency. His reply to the question of how we can conceive of an immutable God as the agent of change is that we have no difficulty with the similar mystery of how the

human soul can be conceived of as the agent of physical movement (Gen. ad lit. 8.21.40).

Of course, Augustine was not content simply to silence a serious question in this way. Elsewhere he pursues the mystery of human agency further, suggesting that the soul does not act directly on the body (Gen. ad lit. 7.19.25). Instead its wishes are mediated by the highest corporeal elements, namely, air and fire²⁰. The result of these speculations is that a wedge is driven between soul and body: his psychological dualism is much more than an "isolated countervailing theme" (Santmire 1985, 68). On the contrary, it pervades his entire spirituality and colours his understanding of the relationship between human and nonhuman.

(b) Embodiment

What, then, of Augustine's attitude to the body?

The young Augustine appears to have retained some vestiges of the Manichees' hostility to the body²¹. For example, in his early treatise De quantitatae animae, he made it clear that he considered bodily existence to be a state of alienation (O'Connell 1978, 62).

This hostility gave way to a more moderate position under the impact of biblical teaching on the matter. Two aspects of the biblical witness appear to have been of particular importance. One was its insistence on the reality of the incarnation: Augustine could not evade the insistence of both Bible and orthodoxy that the Son of God

condescended to dwell in an ordinary human body. But, even if that could have been evaded, the Bible's insistence on a general physical resurrection forced him to concede that embodiment is part of God's ultimate plan for us.

The position adopted in his mature writings is that soul and body, though distinct, are intimately related²². Indeed so close is their relationship that any disorder in that relationship is translated into illness or sin (Mus. 6.5.13). However, this recognition of a close relationship between soul and body cannot evade the fact that, since they are ontologically distinct, one must be superior to the other. Thus the proper relationship between soul and body can only be understood in terms of the relationship between master and slave²³:

it is necessary that the soul be ruled by a Superior and rule the inferior. That Superior is God alone; that inferior is the body alone ... Therefore, as the entire soul cannot be without its Lord, so it cannot excel without its slave. (Mus. 6.5.13)

In the same passage he makes it clear that the soul's telos is to participate in the eternal (rational) things of God and that this is completely incompatible with taking notice of its carnal slave. The resurrection body, understood by Augustine as the perfect slave, is literally beneath the notice of its master, the soul:

just as the the spirit is quite appropriately called carnal when it is the servant of the flesh, the flesh will with equal propriety be called spiritual, when it serves the spirit. This is not because the flesh will be converted into spirit ... but because it will submit to the spirit with a ready obedience, an obedience so wonderfully complete that the body will fulfil the will of the spirit in such a way as to bring perfect assurance of indissoluble immortality, free from any

feeling of distress, and relieved of any possibility of corruption, any trace of reluctance. (Civ. 13.20)

(c) The ascent to God

We have already referred to the telos of the human soul and the role in it envisaged for matter by Augustine. Before concluding the chapter it would be worthwhile to look a little more closely at Augustine's programme for Christian spirituality and its implications for a theology of nature. The quest for ultimate fulfilment is not one that the soul can initiate on its own behalf. Rather, it is initiated by God's gracious providence (Vera relig. 17.33). God calls the soul to the fullest possible participation in Being, in the divine reality. To Augustine's hierarchical way of thinking this entails leaving behind the present existence: an existence characterised by the uncertainty of knowledge derived from corporeal senses, and the restlessness of temporal experience. God calls us to eternal rest in the enduring realm of reason. This is the true import of those famous, "you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you" (Conf. 1.1).

Such a view clearly lends itself to interpretation in terms of an ascent from this (lower) material realm to a (higher) spiritual realm (O'Connell 1978, 21). Augustine describes this ascent in some detail:

In the first stage he is taught by the rich stores of history which nourish by examples. In the second stage he forgets human affairs and tends towards divine things. He is no longer kept in the bosom of human authority, but step by step by the use of reason he strives to reach the highest unchangeable law. In the third stage he confidently marries carnal appetite to

strong reason, and inwardly rejoices in the sweetness of the union. Soul and mind are joined together in chaste union. There is as yet no compulsion to do right, but, even though no one forbids sin, he has no pleasure in sinning. The fourth stage is similar, only now he acts much more firmly, and springs forth as the perfect man, ready to endure and overcome all the persecutions, tempests and billows of this world. In the fifth stage he has peace and tranquillity on all sides. He lives among the abundant resources of the unchangeable realm of supreme ineffable wisdom. The sixth stage is complete transformation into life eternal, a total forgetfulness of temporal life passing into the perfect form which is made according to the image and likeness of God. The seventh is eternal rest and perpetual beatitude with no distinguishable ages. (Vera relig. 26.49)

Thus love of this world is inappropriate for anyone bent on ascending to God. Augustine regards love of the temporal and rational contemplation of the eternal as mutually exclusive. "Life which delights in material joys and neglects God tends to nothingness and is thereby iniquity" (Vera relig. 11.22; cf. 3.6, 49.97-98, Hom. 1Jn 2.9-13).

However, we should note that, for Augustine, love of the temporal was not merely the responsible care for nature advocated by present-day environmentalists. Love or desire indicated an ontological orientation. For a soul to love temporal, corporeal nature meant for Augustine that the higher was directed towards the lower. Thus it overturned the divinely ordained hierarchy of being. Such an orientation meant that the soul, instead of being the free lord of the material creation, became its slave.

In such a state the soul's relation to matter changes radically. Animals which before the Fall could not harm humankind become dangerous beasts, harmless plants become

noxious weeds, and manual labour becomes back-breaking toil (Gen. ad lit. 3.15.24-18.28). Similarly fallen humankind gives up the proper use of the material creation in favour of its sensual use²⁴. It is important to remember that Augustine did not regard matter itself as responsible for this state. Matter, as such, is morally neutral: "it was not the corruptible flesh that made the soul sinful; it was the sinful soul that made the flesh corruptible" (Civ. 14.3).

The opposite state, of rational contemplation of the eternal, denotes an orientation towards and a desire for that which is higher, more real. It is the state from which we have fallen and to which we are recalled by divine providence. This gracious call to fallen humankind imposes on us a responsibility: "no one is to receive assistance from his superiors to know and grasp the grace of God, unless he is prepared with a pure affection to assist his inferiors to the same" (Vera relig. 28.51). But this obligation does not extend beyond the ontological gap between the spiritual and material creations. In any case, such benevolence means, for Augustine, willing assent to the fulfilment of another's telos (O'Donovan 1980, 32-36). The telos of the lower creation is to serve humankind and assist us in our contemplation of the higher.

This is the context in which Augustine's stress on contemptus mundi is to be understood. Fallen humankind's inordinate desire for the material world has to be reversed. This slogan serves as a corrective to that

desire in the preliminary stages of the ascent. Thus he exhorts his friend Honoratus to, "Think of endurance that makes light of crosses and flames; of liberality that distributes its patrimony to the poor; of contempt of this world not stopping short of a longing for death" (Util. 17.35).

If contempt for this life is the corrective to our improper use of creation, what is Augustine's teaching about the proper use of creation?

We have already seen that Augustine frowned upon the sensual enjoyment of the material creation and even study of the created order for its own sake has absolutely no place in his scheme. The possibility that life might delight in material joys without, thereby, neglecting God simply did not occur to him. He insists that,

We should not vainly behold the beauty of the sky, the order of the stars, the brightness of light, the alternations of day and night, the monthly courses of the moon, the fourfold seasons of the year, the meeting of the four elements, the life-force of seeds begetting forms and numbers, and all things that keep their nature and their appropriate measure each in its own kind. In considering these things there should be no exercise of vain and perishing curiosity, but a step should be taken towards immortal things that abide for ever. (Vera relig. 29.52)

Here we pick up the positive note in Augustine's understanding of matter. Since it exists only by participating in the Being of the Creator, even the material creation can direct us towards the source of its being as we contemplate its order and beauty: "the whole nature of the universe itself, which surrounds us and to which we also belong, cries aloud that it has the most

exalted Creator of all" (Trin. 15.4.6; cf. Vera relig. 11.21-22). Thus, there is a right use of matter; not enjoying it for its own sake, but using it as an instrument for the contemplation of higher things:

If fleshly pleasure is loved, let it be carefully considered and vestigial traces of number will be recognized in it. We must, then, seek the realm where number exists in complete tranquillity; for there existence is, above all, unity. (Vera relig. 42.79)

However even this positive note is muted when we recall that Augustine regarded material reality as inferior to spiritual reality for such purposes. At best, nature is to be regarded as a dispensable instrument of contemplation to be supplanted by the trinitarian structure of the human soul as soon as one is sufficiently advanced in the spiritual life. One recalls the ascending series of psychological trinities in the later books of De trinitate and the suggestion that they were, in fact, part of the itinerary for the journey towards true knowledge of God.

Such a view of the religious life naturally lends itself to mere toleration of the physical world while the soul awaits the time of escape from this realm.

6. CONCLUSIONS: VESTIGES OF A WORLD-AFFIRMING THEOLOGY?

The following implications may be drawn from the preceding discussion: (1) Augustine's view of nature is essentially static, a divinely ordered context for human affairs. (2) The hierarchical structure of being which informs his theology subordinates matter and irrational life to

humankind and God. The lower orders exist in order to serve the higher. Thus matter and irrational life achieve their telos in service to humankind (just as the telos of humankind is service to God).

However, it would be wrong to dismiss Augustine as entirely hostile to the nonhuman creation. There are clear world-affirming elements in his theology. Unfortunately they are fragmentary and remain largely undeveloped. For example, his insistence on the value of the material creation for the contemplation of God could in another context have become the basis for a more positive Christian assessment of nature.

Further development of his belief in a physical resurrection would ultimately have led to the discarding of the Neoplatonic myth of the fall and return of the soul, and, with it, the rejection of an ascent-oriented spirituality. Thus it would have necessitated the transformation of Augustine's anthropology, psychology and spirituality. O'Connell 1978 argues that it would also have necessitated a transformation of his aesthetic theory. Finally these changes would have entailed a corresponding change in his eschatology.

Santmire does see such a transformation at work in Augustine's treatment of eschatology in the later books of De civitate Dei (e.g., Civ. 20.16, 22.29). He argues that we can see in this work a return to a more literal, physical view of the eschaton (Santmire 1985, 64f.). Now it is certainly possible to point to passages which lend

themselves to such an interpretation, but, in the very same books he denies any continuity between the physical universe as it now appears and the eschatological environment. For example,

the qualities of the corruptible elements which were appropriate for our corruptible bodies will utterly perish in the burning, and our substance itself will acquire the qualities which will be suited, by a miraculous transformation, to our immortal bodies, with the obvious purpose of furnishing the world, now renewed for the better, with a fitting population of human beings, renewed for the better in their flesh. (*Civ.* 20.16)

This passage illustrates the difficulty: Augustine is quite ambiguous in his use of such terms as flesh and body. If we assume (as Santmire does) that Augustine has consciously changed his position then we may read it as a corrective to an earlier spiritualised approach. However, it is equally possible to read it as continuous with his earlier theology. This latter approach is more in keeping with the mature Augustine's own view, as found in his *Retractationes*²⁵.

Amongst the vestiges of a more positive attitude to nature, we might include his very pictorial, even physical analogies for providence. Again Santmire cites these as evidence of a change of heart, and again I believe he has overstated the case. A more convincing explanation is surely that which O'Connell uses with reference to the parallel mismatch between his explicit aesthetic (which is intellectualist and spiritualising in its implications) and his rich verbal artistry (which draws freely from the corporeal world and even from human sexuality). He

explicitly maintains the continuity of his theological and philosophical system. However, his faithfulness to Scripture results in the appearance of rich and moving passages which seem to point in a different direction.

Looked at in this way, Santmire's very sympathetic account of Augustine's theology of nature may be regarded as an authentically Augustinian approach: but one which, in its development goes far beyond what Augustine himself envisaged. However, this affirmative approach to the non-human is embedded in a philosophical system which is consistently negative. Western Christianity has inherited both, but it is the latter which has so often been dominant.

NOTES

1. This widely accepted tenet of Hellenistic theology penetrated into Christian theology in the form of the via negativa.
2. Mackey 1983, for example, insists that Augustine loses sight of genuinely substantial differences within the Godhead which were dealt with more satisfactorily by the older subordinationist model.
3. For example, Leonard Hodgson, John Burnaby, and Harry Wolfson.
4. Augustine's Neoplatonic methodology is not confined to his adoption of the method of introspection in the later books of De trinitate. Throughout the work, what he says about God is said within the restrictions imposed by the via negativa, e.g.,
let us think of God, if we are able, and insofar as we are able, in the following way: as good without quality, as great without quantity, as the Creator who lacks nothing, who rules but from no position, and who contains all things without an external form, as being whole everywhere without limitation of space, as eternal without time, as

making mutable things without any change in Himself, and as a Being without passion. (Trin. 5.1.2).

The logical conclusion of this is his famous denial of positive content to the doctrine of the Trinity: the assertion that there are three Persons in the Godhead is not to be understood as saying something positive about God but rather as a denial of singularity (Trin. 7.4.9).

5. Augustine's approach suggests that this was regarded by him primarily as a problem of trinitarian discourse. Interestingly, one of Mackey's criticisms of Augustine is precisely that he reduced the Persons to a set of logical rules about how we may speak of God (Mackey 1983, 155).
6. The precise nature of this argument is interesting. The rejection of modalism depends on the assertion that, since God is faithful, God reveals himself: that what he is in revelation must correspond to what he is in himself. It seems that an axiological premise has been coerced into yielding an ontological conclusion. As we shall see later, there is some doubt as to whether Augustine's insistence on the divine simplicity gives the desired result of an intrinsic relationship between the economic and the essential. This suggests the ironical possibility that in order to avoid modalism it may be necessary to drop the very assertion that was intended as a safeguard against it.
7. This could be either hierarchical or non-hierarchical. In the former case, it could easily be confused with subordinationism proper.
8. It may even have blinded him to the subordinationist possibilities of the philosophers he most admired, explaining why he accused the Neoplatonists of tritheism rather than subordinationism in their treatment of the primal hypostases.
9. Augustine does not distinguish between love and unity. Indeed he maintains the Hellenistic tradition of treating human love as a special case of the cosmic love which western science has more recently dubbed gravity (O'Donovan 1980, 19-24; cf. Civ. 11.28, 19.12).
10. Taking his inspiration from Gen. 1:2, Augustine uses the incongruous metaphor of hatching (Gen. ad lit. 1.18.36).
11. For example, his earliest essay in the exegesis of Genesis, De genesi contra manichaeos, was inspired by his reaction against the Manichees.
12. Had he done so, this would have undermined one of the major motives for the ascent theme in his spirituality.
13. Augustine recognises the essentially spiritual nature of sin and evil, e.g., "there is no evil except sin and sin's penalty, that is, a voluntary abandonment of highest being, and toil among inferior beings which is not voluntary" (Vera relig. 40.76).
14. Augustine's Pythagorean-Platonic orientation is evident in the fact that the aspect of the material universe

- which most clearly reveals to him the divine handiwork is its quantifiability (Gen. ad lit. 4.2.2-7.13).
15. To be fair to Augustine, his purpose in the passage cited is not to argue for the fixity of species. Instead, he makes the point that the reliable transmission of a species' characteristics from one generation to the next is part of God's providential care: God ensures the continuance of the species. However, The static character of the natural order is also implied by his frequent use of the Stoic aesthetic (or theodicy) of totality: the cosmos is to be judged, like a painting, not by localised darkness or ugliness, but by the overall artistry. Not only is the analogue of the painting static but a universe in which such an overall view was possible would on modern physical understandings of the universe preclude the sort of dynamism with which we are, in fact, faced.
 16. To be specific, Santmire relies on Augustine's statements in Trin. 3.8.13 and Gen. ad lit. 9.17.32.
 17. The theory seeks to reconcile the instantaneous creation of Ecclus. 18:3 with the seven days' work of Gen. 1 (Copleston 1950, 76-77).
 18. It is arguable that through his psychological theory of time, Augustine succeeded in psychologising history: the only genuine history is the history of the soul, the rest is subject to the deterministic laws of nature. Thus he may have laid the foundations for the conflict between nature and history that has plagued recent western thought.
 19. He draws a revealing distinction between the masculine animus or rational soul (common to humans and incorporeal spirits), and the feminine anima or irrational soul (common to humans and lower animals). The spiritual, rational, celestial and male is superior to the corporeal, irrational, terrestrial and female (Gen. ad lit. 8.23.44).
 20. His speculations about the role of air within the body as the medium which translates the souls' wishes into physical movements seem alien to us. However, they suggest that Augustine was well-versed in classical anatomy and hydraulics: an observation that seems incongruous with his insistence that the material universe should not be studied for its own sake.
 21. He may have been able to retain this aspect of Manichaean teaching because of parallels in Christian theology. For example, Origen regarded the body as divine punishment for sin.
 22. This affirmation of the necessity of embodiment has an important positive effect on his thought with regard to the telos of the soul. It protects his doctrine of the ascent of the soul to God from collapsing into Neo-Platonic monism. Embodiment eternally distinguishes the rational soul from its divine creator: it ensures that the end of the ascent is still participation rather than union.
 23. It is sometimes suggested that Augustine moderated his

position still further, envisaging the relationship as akin to marriage (e.g., Santmire 1980, 180). However, this ignores the essentially hierarchical nature of Augustine's ontology. It also overlooks the fact that, even though ontologically equal, Augustine regarded the female as existing in order to serve the male, just as a human slave serves a human master (Gen. ad lit. 8.23.44).

24. This theme could be developed into an Augustinian environmentalism: our exploitation of creation being classified as an improper, sensual use (cf. Santmire 1985, 69-70).
25. For example, at one point Augustine even corrects a comment in De vera religione to make it more spiritual than before. Thus the resurrection body will not only be immortal but will not require food or drink: it will be sustained entirely by spirit (Retract. 1.13.4).

CHAPTER 3
GOD AND NATURE
IN CLASSICAL WESTERN THEOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the place of the nonhuman creation in two classical western theological systems, one scholastic and one from the Reformation. Both systems are clearly indebted to Augustine. But to what extent have they adopted and passed on to subsequent generations his view of the nonhuman creation?

1. ST BONAVENTURE

(a) Introduction: The Context of St Bonaventure's Theology

St Bonaventure's theology has long been overshadowed by that of his contemporary St Thomas Aquinas. However, in the context of a theological consideration of nature, it well repays careful consideration.

Until relatively recently it was fashionable to present Bonaventure and Aquinas as rivals. From this perspective, he appeared as the traditionalist, ardently defending the Augustinian tradition of the catholic church against the Aristotelian novelties of Aquinas (Knowles 1962, 246;

Tillich 1968, 141). However this assessment of their relationship has been challenged by recent studies which highlight the continuity between their positions rather than their differences.

In the case of Bonaventure, a convincing case has been made for his indebtedness to Aristotle¹ (Quinn 1973). As for Aquinas, his doctrine of God (in particular, his understanding of the Trinity) is now seen to be firmly Augustinian (Pelikan 1978, 277-79), and recent studies of his philosophy suggest a greater affinity with Neoplatonism than was formerly thought to be the case (Hankey 1987). While it would be an exaggeration to see Bonaventure and Aquinas as representatives of a single school of thought (pace van Steenberghen) they may be regarded as seeking, in their distinct ways, to achieve a synthesis of Aristotelianism and Augustinianism. The view that Bonaventure's system is "an Augustinianism developed through the centuries and re-thought in relation to Aristotelianism" (Copleston 1950, 245) appears to be sound.

Nevertheless, it is to Augustine rather than Aristotle, that we must look for the major source of his theological thought. Through his teacher, Alexander of Hales, he imbibed the Augustinian theology and spirituality of St Anselm and the Victorines (the latter also opening him up to other influences, notably that of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite). This indebtedness is clear from the frequent and very sympathetic citations of Augustine in his writings (e.g., Brev. 3.5)². Thus he is a natural object of study

for anyone wishing to examine the historical development of Augustinianism.

However, there is another connection which makes him especially valuable for a study of Christian attitudes to the natural world, namely, his personal and theological connection with St Francis of Assisi. It is unlikely that he ever met Francis but, growing up in Italy at the time when Francis' charismatic influence was at its peak, he could not help but be influenced by the saint³. Having become minister-general of the Franciscan Order at the early age of 36, he is rightly regarded as the first great Franciscan theologian.

Interestingly the influence of St Francis is far less clear in his theological system than in his personal piety. The driving force behind his theological synthesis may well have been the spirituality of St Francis, but in the interaction with Aristotle and Augustine it has been transformed almost beyond recognition (Cousins 1978b, 24).

(b) St Bonaventure's Doctrine of the Trinity

It is generally agreed that the key to understanding his theological system is his doctrine of the Trinity (Hayes 1981, 12; Pelikan 1978, 283). As might be expected in a commentator upon the Sentences, he follows Peter Lombard in making the doctrine of the triune God the starting point of his entire theological system (Brev. 1). However he goes far beyond Lombard in transforming the doctrine of the Trinity into the organising principle for his entire world

view. He discerns trinitarian structures not only within theology itself but at the very roots of created reality. As a result, both his ontology and his epistemology are explicitly trinitarian. In his own words: "this is the sum total of our metaphysics: concerned with emanation, exemplarity, and consummation, that is, illumination through spiritual radiations and return to the Supreme Being" (Hex. 1.17).

(i) The Father as First Principle: Bonaventure takes for granted the Augustinian principle that all divine operations ad extra proceed from a single divine principle⁵. He consistently argues that the fact of creation entails a single first principle. Thus the presupposition of a simple, indivisible divine nature is the basis and a recurring theme of his treatment of the Trinity (Brev. 1.3.2, 1.4.2, 1.5.2, 1.6.2, 1.7.2, 1.8.4, 1.9.4).

This single divine nature could validly be understood in terms of being. However, since it is to be equated with the living God, he prefers to speak in terms of goodness (a category which he holds to be ontologically prior to being). This approach is also fundamental to his positive understanding of the Trinity, since it enables him to deploy the Dionysian principle of the self-diffusiveness of the good⁶ (Brev. 1.2.3).

This first principle is the source of all things: the fount of all goodness and being. It is unbegotten. However, thanks to the principle of self-diffusiveness, Bonaventure understands unbegottenness positively as a

correlative of the divine fecundity. Furthermore, by virtue of its status as first principle, this entity has absolute power⁷ (thus establishing a positive basis for understanding God as omnipotent and transcendent).

However, he departs from the Augustinian tradition in one important respect. He unequivocally identifies this unbegotten, omnipotent and infinitely fecund first principle with the person of the Father. The identification is inevitable once unbegottenness is attributed to the first principle (Brev. 1.3.7). This characterisation of the Father as fons et origo trinitatis is reminiscent of the Greek Fathers rather than Augustine (Cousins 1978a, 51).

(ii) The innertrinitarian emanations: The necessity of a triune God follows from the infinite self-diffusiveness of the Good taken together with the Anselmian logic of perfection. God as perfect good or love not only exists necessarily but necessarily requires a perfect expression or object. This immediately rules out Dionysius' own view that creation was such an expression. No finite creature (nor even the sum total of creatures) can perfectly express infinite fecundity of God. It follows that there must be a perfect coequal and coeternal expression of the Good. This can only be the divine Logos. Furthermore, we cannot rest content with binitarianism for it would then be possible to conceive a yet more perfect Good/Love which did not cling jealously to the object of its love but shared it with a third coequal and coeternal entity. It is not necessary to continue the argument to a quaternity and so ad infinitum

for that would not lead to any further qualitative increase in the perfection of the Good (Itin. 6.2).

(iii) The Son, Word, or Image: "Image designates the Son as the conformed similitude, the Word as the intellectual similitude, and the Son as the similitude of the same nature" (Brev. 1.3.8).

As the complete and perfect self-expression of the Father, the Son is to be regarded as that unitary conception in which the Father knows himself perfectly⁸. The Image completely sums up all the possibilities inherent in the Father's power and fecundity. Since these possibilities include the innertrinitarian emanations themselves, it follows that the Son is the Image not only of the Father but of the entire Trinity⁹. This is the significance behind one of his favourite designations of the Son, namely, the Hierarch (Brev. prol. 3; Hex. 21; Itin. 4.6; Lign. 40). As Hierarch, the Son is the primordial model for the trinitarian ordering of all reality (not excluding God Himself)¹⁰.

It also follows that the divine Image contains the archetypes of creation as a subset of the infinitude of possibilities which it images¹¹. This leads directly to a Christocentric (and, hence, trinitarian) doctrine of creation.

As both Image of the Trinity and Archetype (or, Exemplar) of creation, the Son may be regarded as the centre of both the Trinity and creation. Thus he is the point of contact between the triune God and creation or the openness

of the triune God to the other (Hayes 1978, S90). Bonaventure arrives at the same point of view by a different route:

And so, if God is supreme righteousness in Himself as the Beginning and as the End, it is necessary to posit within Him an intermediate Person of His own nature, so that one be only producing, another only produced, and the intermediary both producing and produced. It is necessary also to posit a medium between the origin and the return of things (Reduc. 23)

(iv) The Holy Spirit: "the gift designates Him as a voluntary gift, the love or nexus as voluntary and especial gift, and the Holy Ghost designates Him as a voluntary, especial, and hypostatic gift" (Brev. 1.3.9).

Turning to the Spirit, we find that He appears in Bonaventure's treatment of the Trinity primarily in the Augustinian role of bond of love between Father and Son. Although his use of Anselm's logic of perfection would suggest that the Spirit is the perfecter of the Trinity, this role is reserved for the Son.

(v) Vestiges and analogies of the Trinity: We shall discuss Bonaventure's characterisation of creatures as vestiges of the Trinity later. However, it is appropriate to say something at this point about his use of Augustine's psychological analogy.

Contrary to what might be expected (in the light of certain affinities to the eastern Fathers) he proceeds, in traditional Augustinian fashion, to use the triadic structure of the human psyche as a vehicle for the contemplation of the divine Trinity.

His use of the psychological analogy in Itin. 3 leads

him into a strikingly monistic expression of the triunity of God:

From memory, intelligence comes forth as its offspring, since we understand when a likeness which is in the memory leaps into the eye of the intellect in the form of a word. From memory and intelligence love is breathed forth as their mutual bond . . . If, then, God is a perfect spirit, he has memory, understanding, and will; and he has the Word generated and Love breathed forth, which are necessarily distinct since one is produced by the other--not in the order of essence, not in the order of accident, therefore in the order of persons. (Itin. 3.5)

Personal distinctions appear to have been introduced not in order to say something positive about God but rather to provide a way of avoiding the obviously heretical alternatives of accidental or essential distinctions. It is worth noting that this Book of the Itinerarium also follows Augustine in equating love with will, or desire.

(c) The trinitarian basis of creation

(i) Extratrinitarian exemplarism: Since both are the direct result of the divine fecundity, Bonaventure understands the extratrinitarian activity of creation to be directly analogous to the innertrinitarian emanations. Indeed, he is prepared to go so far as to use emanationist metaphors for the activity of creation. The most striking example of this is his tendency to liken God to the fountain from which creation flows like a river (Hex. 13.1-6).

The innertrinitarian emanations thus become the basis for a trinitarian model for the entire history of creation. Significantly that model is the Neoplatonic one of descent and return. The egressus of creation is directly analogous

to the emanation or generation of the eternal Son, while the reditus is made possible by the mediation of the incarnate Son. One effect of this trinitarian pattern is that it imparts to his doctrine of creation the same dynamism that is apparent in his doctrine of God (Cousins 1978a, 99).

More specifically, it is through the Son that the intratrinitarian relations become the causal pattern not only for the procession or emanation of creation (including humankind) but also for its return to perfect participation in the divine life. The Son as the perfect expression of the Father and Image of the Trinity is the eternal dispositive exemplar of all possible creations. As such, the divine exemplar so disposes creation that it too is an expression of deity, albeit a finite and partial expression. In other words, the Word is the operative principle in creation through which the Father exercises his causality (Dourley 1975, 128). By extension every individual creature is in some sense an expression of the triune God.

The doctrine of exemplarism was, in his view, an important pillar of orthodox Christian belief. For example, its denial, by Aristotle, appeared to entail both the denial of divine knowledge of the world (with its attendant denial of providence) and an affirmation of the eternity of the world (in direct opposition to revealed truth).

(ii) The Son as divine art: The close relationship, in Bonaventure's theology, between the innertrinitarian processions and the procession of creation from God might suggest an element of pantheism. We have already noticed

his preference for emanationist metaphors: a fact which seems to add weight to this suspicion. However, before drawing this conclusion it is important to note how he qualifies the concept of emanation when he uses it in relation to creation.

He invariably refers to exemplary emanation (or, the Exemplar) as divine art (e.g., Itin. 1.3). This, he explains, denotes that it is an act of will. God has freely chosen to actualise some of the divine possibilities in time. In thus qualifying exemplary emanation he clearly intends to distinguish it from the modes of emanation which are natural to the Godhead, namely generation and spiration. Only if creation were the complete actualisation of the infinitude of divine possibilities could it be continuous with the Godhead. His understanding of creation is rather that it is a voluntary expression of the (already fully satisfied) self-diffusiveness of God.

(iii) The participation of creation in God: An important corollary of his exemplarism is the doctrine that creatures, both individually and as a whole, exist by participating in the being of God. Like emanation, talk of participation in deity can have pantheistic overtones. Bonaventure is aware of this but rather than seeking alternative terminology he chooses to explain his usage. He rules out any suggestion of a univocal participation of God and creation in some common factor (such as being): this would indeed be a form of pantheism¹².

Instead he asks us to understand this participation as

analogical (Copleston 1950, 267). Creatures exist insofar as they conform to their divine archetype (Dourley 1975, 177): truth (and, hence, existence) is the perfect conformity of the creating intellect to the creature itself (Hex. 3.8). Thus every creature exists in a threefold way: "in matter, in the mind and in the Eternal Art" (Itin. 1.3).

What follows from this is a hierarchy of being based on the degree of conformity to the divine archetype. He clearly believes that some creatures conform more closely to their archetype than others. But the hierarchy also operates with respect to the threefold existence of each creature. The material and intellectual (i.e., human conceptual) expressions of a given creature fail to express fully and accurately the divine archetype of that creature (Tavard 1954, 60). As a result the very finitude of these expressions provides a basis for an ontological evil: "because it is not perfectly adequated to the reason that expresses it or represents it, every creature is a lie, as Augustine says" (Hex. 3.8; cf. Augustine, Vera relig. 36.66).

The perfect truth (and hence the perfect expression) of each creature is to be found in its archetype. Thus true knowledge of the creature (and even of oneself) is to be found only in Christ: "I will see myself better in God than in myself" (Hex. 12.9).

(iv) The resemblance of creatures to God: Since this participation of created being in God constitutes the contingent being of every creature and also forms the basis

for his unending search for vestiges of the Trinity within creation, it is worth examining in more detail.

As we have already noted, being understood as participation implies that every creature is an expression of a divine idea (Hayes 1981, 15). Alternatively, creation as a whole may be regarded as an external image of God. For Bonaventure, this means that every creature is "a mirror through which we may pass over to God, the supreme Craftsman" (Itin. 1.9). Not only does it reflect the being of God but, to the extent that it participates in the transcendentals (unity, truth and goodness), every creature participates in and reflects the triunity of God. This is so because he believes that the transcendentals may be appropriated to the divine Persons: unity corresponding to the Father, truth to the Son, and goodness to the Spirit (Brev. 1.6.1). In connection with this particular appropriation, he also establishes causal links between the divine Persons and every created event: the Father is the efficient cause, the Son the exemplary cause and the Spirit the final cause.

All this might suggest the possibility of developing a particularly ambitious natural theology: one capable not only of proving the existence of God but also of showing him to be triune. However, Bonaventure disavows any such procedure. Quinn summarises his position thus¹³,

There is nothing similar in creatures to the Trinity of God, nor can human reason, moving to God from creatures, come to know that there is a plurality of persons in the unity of the divine essence. The analogical similarities that we establish between

creatures and the Trinity depend entirely on our belief in a plurality of persons in God. (Quinn 1973, 499)

Our discernment of the Trinity in creation rests upon prior faith in the Trinity and a corresponding knowledge of the divine Exemplar of creation. But, even if the traces of the triune God in creation were such as to enable the unaided human mind to deduce the existence of the Trinity, this would still be ruled out by the universal fact of human sinfulness. Our sinfulness has rendered us incapable of reading the book of creation.

Indeed, for Bonaventure, our contemplation of any creature must be such as to lead the mind to God. The ascent to God is the only valid motive for the contemplation of creation. Any other motive, any desire to contemplate creation for its own sake is nothing less than an intellectual expression of sin. For example, "if we stoop to a knowledge of things acquired by experimenting them, investigating beyond what is conceded to us, we fall from true contemplation and taste of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as did Lucifer" (Hex. 1.17)¹⁴. This is the dominant message of his early work, On Retracing the Arts to Theology, and the same emphasis is visible in his major work on spirituality, The Soul's Journey into God.

A corollary of this insistence that contemplation of creation must be motivated by a desire for God is that the value of the nonhuman creation lies precisely in its capacity to act as a sign of God, and nothing more. Bonaventure remarks that "signs are worthless unless the things themselves are understood" (Hex. 13.3).

We have already noted that different degrees of conformity to the divine archetype give rise to corresponding degrees of reality: a hierarchy of being. The more closely a given creature conforms to its divine archetype the more real it is. It is also more true, more rational, and morally better. Perfection entails a return to perfect communion with the triune God. He expresses this hierarchy in terms of a threefold classification of created being. All irrational creatures are vestiges (or shadows) of the Trinity. The next level consists of rational creatures (including humans) which are images of the Trinity. The highest level, that of similitude, is reserved for rational creatures reformed by grace (i.e., the saints). All creatures are ordered to God but humans, by virtue of their rationality, are immediately ordered to God while the irrational creatures are only mediately ordered to God.

The lowest level, that of (irrational) corporeal creatures, is sometimes subdivided by Bonaventure. The very lowest corporeal individuals are too lowly to offer the minds of the faithful the least trace of the triune God. Their individuality points to the unity of God alone. He regarded such creatures as mere shadows of God. However, the majority of corporeal creatures are able to point us to the divine triunity by virtue of their participation in the three transcendentals. These he referred to as vestiges (literally 'footprints') of the Trinity.

(d) The place of humankind in creation

(i) The human creature: According to Bonaventure the human creature is a union of body and soul. The soul is the form of the body and is characterised as existing, living, intelligent, and free (Brev. 2.9.1). In this way he distinguishes it from, and asserts its superiority over, the other forms found in terrestrial creatures¹⁵. Unlike its irrational counterparts, the spiritual nature of the rational soul ensures its immortality. Hence he insists on the separability of body and soul (Brev. 2.9.5) and readily accepts Augustine's view that the soul is the mover of the body.

However, just as with Augustine, it would be unfair to dismiss this as crudely dualistic. Soul and body are represented as needing each other for their mutual perfection. Matter was created with an appetite for form. It never exists without form and, when under one kind of form, its appetite for form, far from being fulfilled, becomes an appetite for information by a higher form (Quinn 1973, 283). Thus the human creature (matter informed by the most noble form, the rational soul) is the telos of corporeal creation¹⁶. Similarly, "The nature of the rational and immortal soul requires that, as it has a perpetual existence, so it should have a body to which it may forever give life" (Brev. 7.5.5). Thus, like Augustine, he insists that there must be a physical resurrection if the human soul is to attain to perfection¹⁷.

One would expect Bonaventure to follow Augustine in

equating the rational soul with the imago dei, and this is indeed the case. For example, he draws on the psychological analogy for the Trinity to argue that the rational soul "is capable of holding God in memory, intellect, and will" and that "this is existence in the image of the Trinity through the unity of essence and trinity of powers" (Brev. 2.9.5). Alternatively,

Enter into yourself, then, and see that your soul loves itself most fervently; that it could not love itself unless it knew itself, nor know itself unless it remembered itself, because our intellects grasp only what is present to our memory . . . Consider, therefore, the operations and relationships of these three powers and you will be able to see God through yourself as through an image. (Itin. 3.1)

However, a more subtle view appears in his early Commentaries on Peter Lombard's Sentences. Here the imago dei is presented not as a static possession of the soul but rather in terms of the proper activities of the soul: power, intelligence, and love or will. Thus the task of imageing God entails right use of will by loving the supreme good, right use of intelligence by thinking truly, and right exercise of power by governing the world in conformity with the power of the Creator. His vocabulary at this point even anticipates that of Calvin's discussion of the image of God (Hayes 1981, 19-21)¹⁸.

(ii) Man as microcosm: He not only regards man as the image of God, but also, in a certain sense as the image of creation. Following Genesis (and Aristotle) he treats man as the apex of creation: the final adornment of the six days' work. He is also the centre of creation, the medium

by which the entire universe is perfected, since he alone has the capacity to know God both by His wisdom and his works:

Since there was one creature which had a sense within for an understanding of the interior book, namely, the angel, and another which had its whole sense without, namely, the brute animal, so for the perfection of the universe there ought to be a creature with the two senses mentioned above to understand the book written within and that written without, that is, of the wisdom of God and His work. (Brev. 2.11.2)

The idea that man is central to creation in this sense, that man is the mediator between God and the nonhuman creation, is by no means peculiar to Bonaventure. A very similar idea can be found in Peter Lombard. One might expect it to result in an affirmation of solidarity with the nonhuman creation¹⁹. However, it is precisely humankind's otherness from the nonhuman creation that is emphasised at this point.

Humanity is not to be understood as the image of God in any merely general sense. On the contrary, the imago dei implies a specific relationship with the eternal Image of the Trinity: humankind constitutes an external image of the internal Image (Hayes 1981, 60)²⁰. As such, of course, humankind images the eternal Exemplar of all creation. Thus Bonaventure can speak of humankind as a microcosm or image of creation. As with the use of 'Image' within the Trinity such language entails an element of otherness.

It follows from this analogy that, just as the Trinity is Christocentric, creation is anthropocentric. Similarly there is a clear analogy between the reditus of creation to

God via humankind and the ascent of the soul to God via Christ²¹.

(iii) The ascent of the soul: Following Richard of St Victor (and, ultimately, Augustine) he presents the Christian life as a process of ascent. Specifically it is the soul (rather than the whole person) which is regarded as ascending towards God (Brev. 2.12.1).

As usual he presents the process in a trinitarian form. At its simplest, the process of ascent is modelled upon the three ways in which the triunity of God is manifested in creation (by vestige, image, and similitude). He delights in elaborating this basic triple structure by means of multiple subdivisions²². This tendency has obscured the basic ascent structure. As a result some modern commentators argue that he thought of them as parallel paths to the knowledge of God (e.g., Tavard 1954, 229-47; Cousins 1978b, 23-24). However, this interpretation is hard to reconcile with his frequent use of the metaphor of a ladder between God and man, e.g., "the universe is a ladder by which we can ascend into God" (Itin. 1.2).

What is the significance of this ascent for creation as a whole? In his mature writings, Bonaventure deliberately creates a correspondence between the six days in which the macrocosm was created (actually a threefold process of creation, distinction, and adornment) and the three steps by which the microcosm returns to God. These steps may be regarded as increasing levels of insight or internalisation of the macrocosm (Hayes 1981, 195).

(iv) The telos of the soul: Its internalisation of the macrocosm complete, the soul is ready at last to enter into its telos by transcending not only the world of senses but also itself (Itin. 7.1). Negatively this self-transcendence or ekstasis of the soul is characterised by rest from all intellectual activities (Itin. 7.4). Positively, it is deiformity or mystical union with God, specifically with the Father (since even contact with the Father's self-manifestation in the Son is now transcended). Thus Cousins comments that the silence of ecstasy, "is not merely a subjective state of the mystic, but refers to an aspect of the divinity: to the silence of the Father as the abyss of the divinity" (Cousins 1978a, 108).

(e) Bonaventure's attitude to the nonhuman creation

What are the implications of all this for his understanding of the material creation? As we have already noted, all creatures are ordered to God but only rational creatures are ordered immediately. The nonhuman creation is ordered to God mediately by being ordered to the rational soul. He is quite explicit that creation exists only for the sake of humanity, e.g.,

all corporeal matter was made for human service so that by all these things mankind may ascend to loving and praising the Creator of the universe whose providence disposes of all. This sensible machine of corporeal things is finally a certain home built by the supreme Artificer for man until he comes to the home not made by hands, but in heaven (Brev. 2.4.5)

As we have seen Bonaventure's view of creation is ontologically anthropocentric. Given such an understanding

of the cosmos it is hardly surprising to find a complete absence of a sense of responsibility for creation in his statements about the dominium terrae. On the contrary, responsibility in relation to man's government of creation can only mean using it so as to promote contemplation of God^{2 3}.

Finally, it is hard to avoid the impression that he regards the nonhuman creation as ultimately dispensable. The perfected human soul will be so lost in contemplation of the Holy Trinity that it is no longer conscious of itself let alone the world of senses. In any case the transient phenomena of creation are no more than signs pointing the soul towards God, they will cease to have any significance in the eschaton: "when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away."

2. JOHN CALVIN

(a) Introduction: Reformation and continuity in western Christian attitudes to the natural world

Conventional wisdom has it that the Protestant Reformation was inspired by a reappropriation of the Bible and of St Augustine. The indebtedness to Augustine leads us to expect a continuation of the earlier ambivalence towards the natural world. Two features which seem to confirm this are the distinctive ethical emphasis of Protestant spirituality and the dedivinisation of the world.

Max Weber's reconstruction of Protestant ethics presents the Christian life as a process of ascent to God from this material world of exile. What distinguishes this from the inward ascent of Augustine and Bonaventure is their emphasis on the worldly expression of this spirituality. When Bonaventure wrote of the right use of the material creation, he meant the contemplation of God; a use of creation only open to a small élite. For the Reformers, however, the right use of creation suggested an active response which was accessible to all. This response has been described as an 'innerworldly asceticism' whose chief expressions are cleanliness (in the broadest sense of the term, embracing not only personal hygiene but also moderate consumption of resources, and chastity) and hard work, i.e., "activity in the world to produce tools and, by means of them, profit" (Tillich 1968, 271).

Contrary to some critics, the Protestant Work Ethic does not assign a particular historical cause to the rise of capitalism. However, it does see a functional adaptation of the one to the other. Thus, "there is something in the spirit of Calvinist ethics and some related sectarian ethics which serves the purpose of investment, an important element in the capitalist economy" (Tillich 1968, 271). This adaptation to capitalism has made Reformed Christianity a particular target of the environmentalists.

In addition, environmentalist critiques of Reformation theology point to its reputed dedivinisation of nature and support for experimental science. Ammunition for these

attacks is readily available from the extensive literature on the historical relationship between Christianity and early modern science. For example, without explicitly attributing the change to Reformed teaching, Hooykaas argues that,

a more fully biblical world view has, since the sixteenth century, favoured the rise of modern science and of the world picture connected with it. The model of the world as an organism was replaced by that of the world as a mechanism; the whole development from Copernicus to Newton has rightly been called the mechanization of the world picture. (Hooykaas 1973, 13)

It is argued that innerworldly asceticism together with the new emphasis on the mechanistic world model²⁴ form the ideological basis for subsequent western exploitation of nature. But is there such a clear cut change of opinion with regard to nature? Were the Reformers, in some respects at least, not still men of the Middle Ages? In what follows I shall take John Calvin as representative of the Reformers' attitudes to the nonhuman creation.

(b) The triune God according to Calvin

(i) Calvin's defensive approach: Calvin staunchly defended himself against accusations of trinitarian error and yet, by and large, he ignored the doctrine in his preaching (Stauffer 1977, 151-76). As a result we are dependent on his dogmatic works for evidence about his trinitarian thought.

In these works his defensive and polemical use of the doctrine is striking. In the first edition of The Institutes, he confined his treatment of the Trinity to a

defence of his orthodoxy against Caroli's accusation of Arianism. This was expanded and transformed by his response to changing circumstances until, in the 1559 edition, it was largely devoted to a defence of Christ's divinity against the opinions of Servetus (Inst. 1.13.7-13). This polemicism has raised doubts about whether trinitarianism as such was of much interest to Calvin (Wendel 1963, 166).

His defence of Nicene orthodoxy results in a treatment of the Trinity which is conventional in appearance. Thus anyone who expects to find marks of Augustinian influence in his theology could do no better than to look at this doctrine. And, indeed, he does appear to follow Augustine's lead in the construction of his doctrine of the Trinity. At the outset he states that God "so proclaims himself the sole God as to offer himself to be contemplated clearly in three persons" (Inst. 1.13.2). He immediately follows this with a defence of western trinitarian terminology against the charge that it is nonscriptural. The burden of this defence follows that of the original defenders of Nicene orthodoxy, namely, that "the novelty of words of this sort . . . becomes especially useful when the truth is to be asserted against false accusers". (Inst. 1.13.4). The content, too, appears to be faithful to the Augustinian viewpoint, e.g., accepting without question the filioque clause.

Thus Wendel concludes his examination of Calvin's trinitarianism with the judgement that, "He is closely following St Augustine and perhaps also remembering the writings of certain Greek Fathers . . . But although devoid

of originality, this trinitarian doctrine constitutes an essential part of the theology of Calvin" (Wendel 1963, 169).

However, Calvin diverges from the Augustinian consensus at a number of points which, while individually insignificant, offer the potential for a radical departure from Augustine when taken together.

First there is the very form of his doctrine. His polemical use of the doctrine marks a restoration of one of its major preAugustinian functions, namely, the correct identification of the Christian God as against pagan deities. For Augustine and his followers this was no longer an issue. Instead they were able to concentrate on the creation of a rational explanation of the triunity of the divine being. The result was a highly elaborate and abstract set of logical rules for trinitarian discourse which, ultimately, severed all connections between the divine Persons and salvation history.

This abstract trinitarian discourse was of no interest to Calvin. The new freedom of thought ushered in by the Renaissance, the Humanist movement, and the Reformation itself gave rise to a spate of speculation about God. In the face of this multiplicity of rival doctrines of God, Calvin restores to the doctrine of the Trinity this original function of correctly identifying the Christian God. This was the import of the apparently innocuous remark quoted above: that trinitarian language while nonscriptural was helpful in exposing heresy.

Calvin's faith and theology were firmly rooted in salvation history. Thus, the correct identification of the Christian God hinged on the correct identification of Jesus the Christ with the divine being. As Niesel has pointed out, "The purpose of Calvin's Trinitarianism is to secure the Biblical message "God is revealed in the flesh" against false interpretations" (Niesel 1956, 57). The doctrine of the Trinity was necessary to maintain the Gospel message that, in Christ, God has given himself without reserve to his creatures. In other words, for Calvin, the doctrine of the Trinity ensured an understanding of God as intimately present to, and in, creation²⁵.

Another formal difference between his doctrine and that of the majority of his Augustinian predecessors is the absence of a treatise on the unity of God prior to his account of the Trinity. There is virtually no discussion of the divine attributes prior to the introduction of the doctrine of the Trinity in Inst. 1.13. Thus he has removed one factor which might suggest the priority of a common divine essence over the divine Persons.

Turning to the content of the doctrine, the most obvious novelty is his thorough avoidance of all analogies for the Trinity (whether the wild profusion of vestigia trinitatis to be found in scholastic treatises or the relatively restrained social and psychological analogies of the Fathers). His stated reason is that, "if anything should be inopportunately expressed, it may give occasion either of calumny to the malicious, or of delusion to the

ignorant" (Inst. 1.13.18).

This reminds us that Calvin was also a pastor and teacher. His pastoral concerns were never far away even when he was in the thick of doctrinal controversy. This may partially explain his reluctance to preach about the Trinity (Stauffer 1977, 162f; Warfield 1931, 203). However, his rejection of trinitarian analogies was not simply motivated by pastoral concerns. As we shall see, there are forces in his theological system which would render the analogies (particularly those of Augustine) unpalatable to him, even without his fears for his readers.

At one level, for instance, we may see the rejection as an expression of his firm conviction that a major consequence of the Fall has been the incapacitating of human reason. Thus human reason alone is unable to arrive at a true understanding of God. It follows that analogies based on fallen human nature cannot aid our understanding of God. All they can do, as Calvin points out, is to provide occasions for misunderstanding and disagreement amongst Christians.

(ii) Calvin's understanding of the divine Persons: A superficial reading of The Institutes would suggest that he simply accepts the traditional Augustinian understanding of persona. His own definition of the term is, "a 'subsistence' in God's essence, which, while related to the others, is distinguished by an incommunicable quality" (Inst. 1.13.6). His preference for the term 'subsistentia' arises from the fact that it is a more literal rendering of

hypostasis than the more usual persona. Furthermore on several occasions he cites, with obvious approval, Augustine's reluctance to use the term.

However, his insistence that they are distinguished by an incommunicable quality betrays the fact that he was not satisfied with mediaeval Augustinianism, which defined the personal distinctions solely in terms of opposite relations. As we have noted, this had the effect of subordinating the trinity of Persons to the divine unity.

Calvin wants to maintain the status of the Persons without lapsing into the opposite error of tritheism. To do so it is not enough simply to hide behind the assertion of 'incommunicable qualities'. Calvin recognises that further explanation is needed and expands his definition by adding that the qualities which constitute the permanent distinction between the subsistences are based on the inter-relationships of the Persons.

One effect of this modification of Augustinianism is that the Father is, once again, to be seen as the fount of the Trinity, "the beginning of activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things" (Inst. 1.13.18). Similarly the Son and the Spirit are distinguished by the trinitarian roles attributed to them: "to the Son, wisdom, counsel, and the ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of that activity" (Inst. 1.13.18).

In saying this, he does not intend to call into question the unity of God. On the contrary, he fully

accepts the Patristic principle that every act of God is an act of the entire Trinity operating in concert. However, he is able on the basis of Scripture to offer a correlation of the Persons with different aspects of each action. In doing this he is following the Cappadocians more closely than Augustine.

While no Augustinian would wish to deny these appropriations, the whole thrust of the logic of the Augustinian Trinity is towards a complete dissociation of the divine Persons from their activity in salvation history. As we have seen, this creates the problem of why the Son rather than the Father or the Spirit should become incarnate. Calvin on the other hand treats the divine Persons in such a way that his understanding of them cannot be disentangled from his understanding of salvation history.

(iii) The dynamic being of God: This stress on the relationship between the divine Persons and the external activity of God raises another important point about his doctrine of God. It suggests that he is, in fact, not very interested in the divine essence. This emphasis on divine activity is a corollary of the mediaeval voluntarism which so influenced his belief in divine sovereignty.

In marked contrast to his scholastic predecessors, he focusses the attention of his theology not on the divine essence, but rather on the divine will and, hence, the divine activity. Thus it is not unreasonable to say that, "Calvin elaborated a theology of God's work, not His being" (Klaaren 1977, 40). This need not be interpreted as a

Palamite division of God into ousia and energeia (contra Mackey 1983, 191f.). A more satisfactory explanation would be that Calvin believed that God had revealed his incomprehensible essence in his activity. Thus for Calvin the unity of God was not to be looked for in a static Being²⁶ prior to divine activity but in the very unity of the pluriform activity of creation, redemption, and consummation.

(c) God's creative activity

(i) The triune God and creation: In The Institutes, Calvin locates the doctrine of creation immediately after his treatment of the Trinity. He spells out their relationship by reminding the reader that Genesis 1, "not only speaks of the bare essence of God, but also sets forth for us His eternal Wisdom and Spirit" (Inst. 1.14.2). Accordingly, in his Commentary on Genesis, he points to the divine consultation²⁷ prior to the creation of man as evidence that God, "finds within himself something distinct; as, in truth, his eternal wisdom and power reside within him" (C.Gn. 1:26).

As we have noted above, Calvin (unlike Augustine) feels free to comment on the distinctive roles of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in creation. To the Father is assigned the role of originating cause; to the Son, the role of ordering all things; and, to the Holy Spirit, the roles of sustaining and bringing to fulfilment.

The distinctive role of the Word in creation is

expounded at some length in his defence of the divinity of Christ. He argues that both Old and New Testaments bear witness to the fact

that the world was made through the Son, and that he upholds all things by his powerful word. For here we see the Word understood as the order or mandate of the Son, who is himself the eternal and essential Word of the Father. (Inst. 1.13.8)

The ordering of creation is also ascribed to the Son (or Wisdom of God) in his treatise On the Eternal Predestination of God where he comments that "the world was beautifully ordained by the admirable wisdom of God" (Praed. 10.1). Again, commenting on Jn. 1:4, he attributes to the Son the role of sustaining creation:

the Speech of God was not only the source of life to all the creatures, so that those which were not began to be, but . . . his life-giving power causes them to remain in their condition; for were it not that his continued inspiration gives vigour to the world, every thing that lives would immediately decay, or be reduced to nothing. (C.Jn. 1:4)

As with the Son, Calvin is quite specific about the roles of the Holy Spirit in creation, and again uses biblical testimony to these roles as evidence for the divinity of the Spirit. Thus,

it is the Spirit who, everywhere diffused, sustains all things, causes them to grow, and quickens them in heaven and in earth. Because he is circumscribed by no limits, he is excepted from the category of creatures; but in transfusing into all things his energy, and breathing into them essence, life, and movement, he is indeed plainly divine. (Inst. 1.13.14)

Gn. 1:2 provides him with evidence of the role of the Holy Spirit in sustaining creation. And elsewhere he asserts that the world "is unable to persist in being unless it be sustained by His virtue" (Praed. 10.1)²⁸.

Calvin does not comment on the considerable overlap in the roles assigned to Son and Spirit. In the passages cited both are given the task of sustaining creation. However, there is a significant difference of emphasis: the Son orders and sustains while the Spirit empowers and sustains²⁹.

Finally it is worth noting that his self-restraint in using trinitarian discourse and his total rejection of vestigia trinitatis have resulted in the ejection from the doctrine of creation of the complex hierarchical readings of Genesis 1 beloved of the scholastics. This is perhaps the most striking difference between his Commentary on Genesis and the mediaeval hexaemeral literature. The effect of that literature was to distance God from the material creation by postulating a chain of inferior causes (the hierarchy of being). Its removal implies that God is intimately related to even the lowliest creature and most insignificant event.

(ii) Providence: creation continued: Calvin's emphasis on God's will and activity rather than his being combines with his rejection of the hierarchy of being and causation to demand a new emphasis in the doctrine of creation. It is no longer sufficient to concentrate solely on the divine origination of all things for that path leads inexorably to deism. Calvin sees quite clearly that a doctrine of creation is incomplete without an account of divine providence:

to make God a momentary Creator, who once for all finished his work, would be cold and barren, and we must differ from profane men especially in that we see the presence of the divine power shining as much in the continuing state of the universe as in its inception . . . For unless we pass on to his providence--however we may seem both to comprehend with the mind and to confess with the tongue--we do not yet properly grasp what it means to say: "God is Creator." (Inst. 1.16.1)

Once again, his approach contrasts with that of scholasticism. There providence was regarded as a divine attribute expressed in creaturely activity (on the analogy of a monarch whose words of command are carried out by his servants). As we have already had cause to note, Calvin's God is altogether more intimately involved in his creation: "governing heaven and earth by his providence, he so regulates all things that nothing takes place without his deliberation" (Inst. 1.16.3). He is suspicious of the earlier approach, rejecting out of hand any suggestion of a reduction of providence to natural law (Inst. 1.16.4). He allows that scholastic teaching concerning universal providence was formally correct, but his insistence on the priority of special providence renders the former doctrine irrelevant. As he says, "the universe is ruled by God, not only because he watches over the order of nature set by himself, but because he exercises especial care over each of his works" (Inst. 1.16.4).

Calvin does not explicitly develop his doctrine of providence in trinitarian terms. At best he merely alludes to such a possibility, e.g., the Creator "is he only who with wisdom, goodness and power rules the whole course and order of nature" (Cat.Gen., q.27). However, his insistence

that, in Christian theology, unqualified references to God must always be understood as referring to the Holy Trinity (Inst. 1.13.20) suggests that such a development would be permissible.

It is perhaps significant that his account of the triune God's continuing care for creation is itself threefold: he understands God as manifesting his care in three ways (Niesel 1956, 70). God sustains creatures in being, individually and as a whole: "he sustains, nourishes, and cares for, everything he has made, even to the least sparrow" (Inst. 1.16.1); He bestows upon every individual creature its effective reality (Inst. 1.16.2); and, he guides all things to their appointed end (Inst. 1.16.4). We see here the roots of the later Reformed doctrine of providence, with its threefold division into preservation, concurrence, and government.

Calvin draws a clear distinction between creation and sustenance. While God's providential care is a continuation of his work of creation, there is no sense in which it may be interpreted as continuous creation. In his exegesis of Gn. 2:2, he affirms that God is constantly at work upholding what he has created. However, he has clearly ceased from creation as such: "he desisted from the creation of new kinds of things" (C.Gn. 2:2). He admits the possibility of novelty in creation while maintaining belief in the fixity of species. On the contrary, "many things which are now seen in the world are rather corruptions of it than any part of its proper furniture" (C.Gn. 2:2): in other words, the

rebellion of man has resulted in the progressive defection of creation from a state of primordial perfection.

We have already commented upon his belief that God is immediately present to every creature. This transforms the idea of divine sustenance. It ceases to be an abstract general maintenance of creaturely being. For Calvin, divine sustenance means that God stands in an intimate relation with every event and creature. He is actively involved in every event; his omnipotence is not distant but of "a watchful, effective, active sort, engaged in ceaseless activity" (Inst. 1.16.3).

Because of this insistence on the ubiquity of divine activity, he is able to maintain the Augustinian denial of both fate and chance. Both alternatives deny the absolute sovereignty of God. For Calvin, sovereignty is a clear characteristic of God's sustaining activity.

God's sovereignty in every event is also reflected in his view of concurrence: that any individual creature can be an efficient cause is God's gift to bestow or withhold as he wills³⁰. However, his insistence on the intimacy of God's relationship with his creation leads him to deny the causal necessity of natural events. Nothing occurs without active divine regulation. He argues from scriptural testimony to miracles, not for the existence of God but for the ubiquity of divine action. Thus, referring to Ex. 16:13, Num. 11:31, and Jonah 1:4, he says,

Those who do not think that God controls the government of the universe will say that this was outside the common course. Yet from it I infer that no wind ever arises or increases except by God's express command. (Inst. I.16.7)

One implication of this emphasis is the rejection of the Augustinian doctrine of permission (Inst. 1.18.1; Praed. 10.11). God's role in any event is never the purely passive one of giving permission³¹.

That God is sovereignly active in every event, no matter how insignificant (e.g., the random decay of a sub-atomic particle) easily gives rise to accusations of omnicausality (e.g., Deason 1986, 178; Mason 1982, 360). However, such accusations only carry weight if it can be shown that Calvin understands God's sovereign activity in terms of efficient causality. That he does not can be seen from his rebuttal of the related charge of fatalism: he draws a clear distinction between the idea that God governs every event and the idea of a necessary chain of cause and effect (Inst. 1.16.8).

Two other elements in his treatment of providence support the rejection of this accusation. First, in his discussion of the universality of God's providence he insists that divine activity transcends natural law (Inst. 1.16.3). Second, as his inclusion of a doctrine of concurrence suggests, he would not deny or undermine the efficient causality of creatures. However, like the scholastics he would insist that such finite causes are always secondary causes:

God's providence . . . is the determinative principle of all things in such a way that sometimes it works through an intermediary, sometimes without an intermediary, sometimes contrary to every intermediary. (Inst. 1.17.1)

Calvin's theology is sometimes characterised as voluntarist to distinguish it from the more essentialist approach of the great mediaeval syntheses (Klaaren 1977, 39-45). Insofar as this highlights his stress on the activity as opposed to the being of God this is an accurate assessment. However, it should not be taken to suggest that he regarded God's omnipotence as arbitrary absolute power after the fashion of the late mediaeval nominalists (contra Hunter 1950, 55). On the contrary, God is never arbitrary: "it is easier to dis sever the light of the sun from its heat . . . than to separate God's power from His righteousness." And, "to make God beyond law is to rob Him of the greatest part of His glory, for it destroys His rectitude and righteousness" (Praed. 10.13).

Thus a second characteristic of God's sovereign sustaining activity is that it always operates according to divine wisdom and righteousness.

A third characteristic of sustenance, which underpins its intimacy, is that it is to be understood as fatherly care. Commenting on Psalm 104, Calvin notes that "no part of the world is forgotten by Him, who is the best of fathers, and . . . no creature is excluded from His care" (C.Ps. 104:16). And on more than one occasion, Calvin alludes to Mt. 10:29 in order to underline the fact that God's fatherly care is not restricted to humankind but

extends to every creature (e.g., Inst. 1.16.1).

Turning briefly to God's government of events; we are told that he does so by, and in, wisdom (C.Ps. 104:24), suggesting that government is primarily a role of the Son. Once again, Calvin insists that this is an active regulation of events (Inst. 1.16.7). It appears that sustenance and government while distinct activities of God's providence are nevertheless inseparable. Thus the continuation of the natural world is contingent upon God's sustaining activity. But this is no aimless preservation. On the contrary, sustenance is characterised by its being directed towards a specific end (C.Ps. 104:5; Inst. 1.16.8).

(iii) The telos of creation: Calvin holds that the universe was created with the express purpose of imageing forth God's glory. This is clear from the early chapters of The Institutes and is a recurring theme in his exegesis of Biblical passages referring to creation, e.g., "When it is said that the heavens are a curtain, it is not meant that under them God hides himself, but that by them his majesty and glory are displayed; being, as it were, his royal pavilion" (C.Ps. 104:1). As a result, there is a sense in which Calvin can speak of both creation as a whole and the most insignificant creature as images of God (C.Gn. Arg.; C.Heb. 11:3; Torrance 1949, 37).

This understanding of the purpose of creation underlies his favourite metaphors for the universe. Thus he sees the universe as the theatre of God's glory (C.Gn. Arg.; Inst. 1.5.8; 1.14.20), or as a mirror for God's glory

(Cat.Gen.; C.Gn. Arg.; Inst. 1.5.1). However, both metaphors have anthropocentric overtones. Thus, "After the world had been created, man was placed in it as in a theatre, that he, beholding above him and beneath the wonderful works of God, might reverently adore their Author" (C.Gn. Arg.). And, as a theatre needs its audience, so a mirror calls for a spectator: "our mind is incapable of entertaining his essence. Therefore there is the world itself as a kind of mirror, in which we may observe him, insofar as it concerns us to know him" (Cat.Gen., q.25).

The latter quotation suggests a highly anthropocentric view of the purpose of creation: the rest of the universe exists in order that we may encounter God. However, his language is usually more moderate than this (although still anthropocentric). He frequently states that the universe is so designed and regulated as to evoke worship of the Creator from humankind (C.Gn. 1:26; C.Heb. 11:3; C.Ps. 103:4, 136:3; C.Rom. 3:23; Inst. 1.5.1,6,14; 1.6.1).

In this connection, Calvin relates God's sustaining activity and humankind's worship in a remarkable way. At the end of his comments on Psalm 104, having reminded us of the good things God has bestowed upon us, he adds, "when he sees that the good things which he bestows are polluted by our corruptions, he ceases to take delight in bestowing them," and concludes,

the stability of the world depends on this rejoicing of God in his works; for did he not give vigour to the earth by his gracious and fatherly countenance, he would make it tremble, and would burn up the very mountains. (C.Ps. 104:31)

In other words, God's continued sustenance of creation is made contingent upon our right response to his generosity. And our right response is worship:

This is, indeed, the proper business of the whole life, in which men should daily exercise themselves, to consider the infinite goodness, justice, power, and wisdom of God, in this magnificent theatre of heaven and earth. (C.Gn. 2:3)

If praise is indeed the telos of creation then it is hardly surprising to find humankind and especially the Church singled out by Calvin as the particular objects of God's providential care (Inst. 1.5.7,8; 1.17.1,6). Thus there is some justification in Niesel's ascribing to Calvin the belief that God "guides the movements of nature and history because He wills to guide and maintain His church in this world" (Niesel 1956, 74). However, to be fair to Calvin, there is no suggestion in his writings that God guides the universe solely for the sake of the Church. On the contrary, at the very point that he is expounding providence as the solace of believers, he follows Scripture in basing it on God's fatherly care for "a tiny sparrow of little worth" (Inst. 1.17.6).

(d) Humankind and creation

(i) The human creature: Calvin follows the Augustinian tradition in holding that a human being is the union of diverse components: body and soul (Inst. 1.15.2).

As regards the human body, Calvin stresses its creatureliness (C.Gn. 2:7). We must never forget our humble origins. We are creatures fashioned from the dust of the

earth. This is a recurring feature of his sermons. He takes delight in reminding his congregations that they are creatures of mud (even, of excrement), that they are composed of the same material as cattle, asses, and dogs (Stauffer 1977, 199). Thus one is not surprised to find that, in The Institutes, he presents the human body primarily as the prison house of the soul (Inst. 1.15.2, 3.9.4). What is surprising is that this metaphor from the young Augustine never appears in his sermons (Stauffer 1977, 206). On the contrary, in spite of his stress on the lowliness of our origins, he presents the relationship between soul and body in a much more positive light.

There is no doubt that, of the two, Calvin regards the soul as the more important, as "the principal part" (Inst. 1.15.2) of what it is to be human. The soul is an immortal essence (Inst. 1.15.2) which distinguishes humankind from the lower animals by virtue of its understanding and will (Inst. 1.15.7; C.Gn. Arg.)³². His account of the soul is very similar to the Augustinian tradition. Indeed he asserts that, of all the philosophers, only Plato had come close to an adequate view of the soul (Inst. 1.15.6).

However, he departs from Augustinianism in one very important respect: he does not simply equate the soul with the image of God. Instead he resorts to circumlocutions, e.g., "although God's glory shines forth in the outer man, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul" (Inst. 1.15.3). Thus the image is to be sought within the soul, or, alternatively, the soul is modelled

upon the divine image (C.Ps. 104:30).

This refusal to equate soul and image provides us with another reason for his rejection of the Augustinian analogies of the Trinity. If the soul is not the image of God then the analogy between the faculties of the soul and the Persons of the Trinity collapses (C.Gn. 1:26).

(ii) Imago dei: This raises the notoriously difficult issue of his understanding of imago dei. Negatively, we can see that, because his concept of God is focussed on divine activity rather than being, he must reject the traditional understanding of imago dei (with its close association with essentialism). For Calvin, the image of God is not a possession of man. Just as God can no longer be seen in static terms as divine being, so God's image in man must be seen in more dynamic terms. That he is seeking a more dynamic understanding of imago is reflected in his preference for dynamic metaphors when speaking of it, e.g., as a mirror in the act of reflecting God³³.

But what is his positive understanding of the image of God? The consensus amongst Calvin scholars is that he identifies the image not with any permanent aspect of the soul in itself but with the soul's right orientation towards God, in its integrity or rectitude³⁴ (Inst. 1.15.8). In other words, the image of God is to be sought not in human-kind's psychophysical constitution but in the quality of our relationship with God (Niesel 1956, 67; Torrance 1949, 44; Wendel 1963, 176).

Since it is relational in character, the image of God

is manifested in activity. It is to be sought in the practical exercise of knowledge and will (i.e. all the faculties of the soul) in alignment with God (Klaaren 1977, 44).

(iii) Dominion and stewardship: One outcome of this dynamic view of the image is that man is called to manifest his likeness to God through his dominion over the earth (Klaaren 1977, 44-45).

In common with his Augustinian predecessors, Calvin has no difficulty in determining man's place in the order of nature. He is without question the apex or crown of creation (C.Gn. 1:26; C.Ps. 8:6; Inst. 1.14.2, 22, 1.16.6). Thus he is still able to use the term 'microcosm' to describe man (Inst. 1.5.3), albeit without the wealth of ontological connotations associated with its older use³⁵.

His understanding of the telos of creation and of humankind's place within it leads him to the view that the nonhuman creation is ordained to serve man. Thus "mortal man, as the representative of God, has dominion over the world, as if it pertained to him by right" (C.Ps. 8:6).

This stark statement of human dominion seems to justify fully the environmentalists' critique of the Christian doctrine of dominium terrae. If everything in the world is ours to dispose of as we think fit then the environment has no defence in Christian thought against purely human interests or even human convenience. However, Calvin's view of dominion is not the absolute rule which these words seem to suggest. Human dominion is always qualified by two

factors.

In the first place, humankind's dominion is explicitly restricted to the earth (C.Ps. 104:5). Calvin was a child of the preCopernican era and clearly regarded the earth as the lowest part of the world (or universe). In his view man was given dominion only over that part of creation which was ordained to be his home (C.Gn. 2:1; Inst. 2.1.3).

Secondly, and more importantly, humankind's dominion over the earth is understood to be conditional upon glad submission to God's sovereignty. It is quite wrong to think of it in terms of an absolute power of disposal. Thus Calvin comments that "it is of great importance that we touch nothing of God's bounty but what we know he has permitted us to do" (C.Gn. 1:28). If it be argued that God's declaration of the dominium terrae permits us to do whatever we want, his response would be "that all things were ordained for the use of man, that he, being under deeper obligation, might devote and dedicate himself entirely to obedience towards God" (C.Gn. Arg.). In other words, as we noted above, the dominium terrae is a correlative of the imago dei understood as a right relationship with God.

Man is called to exercise this dominion both practically and theoretically. Taking the latter first, creation serves man as the medium through which he can attain knowledge of God. Conversely, it is man's primary duty (C.Gn. 2:3) to use creation in this way. Calvin's belief in the immediate presence of God to every one of his

creatures creates in him a very strong sense of the presence of God in creation³⁶. Thus he can say,

We see . . . the world with our eyes, we tread the earth with our feet, we touch innumerable kinds of God's works with our hands, we inhale a sweet and pleasant fragrance from herbs and flowers, we enjoy boundless benefits, but in those very things of which we attain some knowledge, there dwells such an immensity of divine power, goodness, and wisdom, as absorbs all our senses. (C.Gn. Arg.)

But creation is not one medium amongst several through which we can encounter the divine. It is the only medium through which we encounter God. We cannot know God by any means other than that by which he has chosen to reveal himself. And , ultimately, he has revealed himself to us by becoming incarnate, a part of this physical universe. Thus,

we know the most perfect way of seeking God, and the most suitable order, is not for us to attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate to the investigation of his essence, which we ought more to adore than meticulously to search out, but for us to contemplate him in his works whereby he renders himself near and familiar to us, and in some manner communicates himself. (Inst. 1.5.9)

Indeed, for Calvin, the contempt for knowledge of the material world and the corresponding preference for autonomous rational speculation about God which he detects in the Augustinians is tantamount to an intellectual expression of human sinfulness. The world is the mirror in which we may see God so long as we use the spectacles of Scripture, but "As soon as ever we depart from Christ, there is nothing, be it ever so gross or insignificant in itself, regarding which we are not necessarily deceived" (C.Gn. Arg.).

By the same token, all purely naturalistic study of the

world is an expression of sin³⁷. Calvin warns against being so concerned with secondary causes that we lose sight of the hand of God (Praed. 10.6).

This material recalls the contemplative dominion advocated by Augustine and Bonaventure. However, Calvin places much more weight on humankind's relative practical dominion over creation. This is not the absolute power condemned by environmentalists. On the contrary, he insists that man was created to nurture this world! "In the beginning," God "commanded that the earth produce all kinds of herbs and fruit without the aid of human art or cultivation; but He now invites the hand of man and works by means of it" (Praed. 10.8). Or, as he says to his readers, "it was thy business to nurture the things provided for thee" (C.Gn. 1:28)

This interpretation of dominion as nurture (paralleling, as it does, his belief in God's fatherly sovereignty) leads him to make what is, perhaps, the classical statement on our stewardship of creation:

we possess the things which God has committed to our hands, on the condition, that being content with a frugal and moderate use of them, we should take care of what shall remain. Let him who possesses a field, so partake of its yearly fruits, that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence; but let him endeavour to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated. Let him so feed on its fruits, that he neither dissipates it by luxury, nor permits to be marred or ruined by neglect. Moreover, that this economy, and this diligence, with respect to those good things which God has given us to enjoy, may flourish among us; let every one regard himself as the steward of God in all things which he possesses. Then he will neither conduct himself dissolutely, nor corrupt by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved. (C.Gn. 2:15)

However, just as man's theoretical dominion has been corrupted by the Fall, so has his practical dominion. The result is immoderation (in modern terms, ruthless exploitation). Amongst the forms of behaviour towards our environment which Calvin condemns is gratuitous cruelty to animals (Praed. 10.4). Man is no longer the rightful master of creation but a thief, taking from it what he can without reference to God. Thus creation no longer serves man willingly but resists his efforts to cultivate it. All that prevents the animal kingdom from rising up and destroying the human race is an instinctive fear of man which is the providentially preserved remnant of man's original dominion (C.Gn. 9:2).

(iv) The telos of man: Unfortunately, the very positive tone of Calvin's doctrine of dominium terrae is undermined by his retention of the otherworldly eschatology of Augustine.

His modified Augustinianism puts much more emphasis on the transformation of life in this world as the way in which man achieves his telos (Gilkey 1976, 184-87). By implication, a transformation of the world is also to be expected. This enabled protestant Christians influenced by Calvin to see their relationship with nature as one of control leading to the greater glory of God. Man is called to coöperate with God in the hastening of the eschaton by acting prudentially.

However, the eschaton remains a transformation of man from his earthly state to a celestial one (C.Gn. 2:7,8).

The result is a paradoxical view of this life and our environment.

(e) The place of the nonhuman in Calvin's thought

Thus the Augustinian contemptus mundi does not disappear from his thought. Instead it undergoes considerable revision. This world is a transient dwelling place. Ultimately our earthly life is one of vanity and futility. In Calvin's eyes the nonhuman creation (and our knowledge of the things of this world) is of strictly temporary significance (C.Gn. 2:8,16; Inst. 3.9.1,2). This is compounded by the fact that, as a result of the Fall, existence in the body is an alienated one.

On the other hand, our earthly existence and our environment are the gifts of a loving God. Thus it is our duty to respond with gratitude for this existence (Inst. 1.14.21,22). The result is a paradoxical principle at the heart of the Christian life: one of a grateful disregard for this life (Inst. 3.9.3).

In the section which follows his statement of our grateful indifference, Calvin draws from it a number of implications which indicate its close relationship to his understanding of stewardship. He uses it to legitimise the moderate use of the physical creation but immediately balances this with an equal emphasis on gratitude and meditation on the God who has given us such gifts(Inst. 3.10.2,3). In subsequent sections he warns Christians to avoid dependence on material goods, advocating instead

acceptance of poverty or moderation in the use of wealth (Inst. 3.10.4,5).

While this has the positive effect of underlining our responsibility to care for the natural world, Calvin's belief in its transience means that the new found dynamism of his theology and anthropology does not spill over into his treatment of the nonhuman creation. The natural world continues to be regarded as essentially static. The telos of creation and the object of providence are both extrinsic to the natural order. Ultimately God governs human society (Inst. 1.5.7,8) but merely sustains creation.

This is compounded by his belief in the primordial perfection of creation. As ordained by God, creation is a static order. The only change which Calvin can envisage is defection due to the sinfulness of God's representative in creation.

There are also traces of an underlying hostility towards the material world. For example, there is the extravagance of his language when describing the origins of the human body. Or there is his belief that the animal kingdom poses a threat to human existence which is only restrained by divine providence.

In conclusion, we may say that Calvin's change of emphasis in theology has the potential to provide a corrective to the negative view of nature found in Augustine and Christian Platonism. God is encountered as active in creation rather than reached by rational speculation (with its attendant downgrading of the world of senses). However

Calvin himself was content with the anthropocentrism he inherited from the Augustinian tradition. Thus his revision of Augustinianism remains far from complete and his theology retains Augustinian features (e.g., a transhistorical and, hence, otherworldly eschaton) which tend to obscure the positive implications of his work for a Christian view of nature.

NOTES

1. It is striking that Aristotle is the philosopher most frequently cited by Bonaventure and the only one whose errors he seeks to excuse (e.g., Hex. 7.2).
2. It should be noted that his appropriation of Augustine was not uncritical. In the example cited, he actually disagrees with Augustine but reinterprets him to cohere with his own opinions.
3. According to legend he was educated by the Franciscans at Bagnoregio. He, himself, claimed to have been healed as a child by the intercessions of St Francis. Furthermore he appears to have regarded the saint as the angel of the sixth seal of the Apocalypse (McGinn 1978, S71).
4. According to Bonaventure, this trinitarian emphasis was characteristic of St Francis' spirituality (e.g., Leg.maj. 3.3).
5. Thus he admits the hypothetical possibility that any or all of the Divine Persons might have become incarnate (Hayes 1981, 56).
6. The connection between Bonaventure and Dionysius is often overplayed to create the impression that his theology has somehow been more deeply affected by Eastern Orthodox thought than that of his contemporaries. However, this principle was well-known to western theologians of the time. Richard of St Victor (whose influence is clearly visible in Bonaventure's writings) used the principle in a very similar way. It is also to be found in the writings of Peter Abailard (Weingart 1970, 32).
7. This follows from the principle that power is proportional to priority, which he attributed to Aristotle.
8. He draws on this to justify speaking of the divine

self-knowledge as the basis for omniscience. God's knowledge of the world is in no sense contingent upon the world, its citizens and its events. Indeed it is not so much knowledge of another as part of the divine self-knowledge. In knowing himself, God has an exhaustive knowledge of all the possibilities open to him including all the possibilities actualised in creation. This raises the question of whether the Son is to be regarded as the basis or ground of the Father's knowledge (thus suggesting a move towards uni-personalism). While this has become a popular way of interpreting Bonaventure, it should be noted that he followed Augustine in denying such a suggestion (1 Sent. 33.2.1, arg. 4 cited by Quinn 1973, 576).

9. The potential for infinite regress inherent in this understanding of the Son appears to have escaped his notice.
10. Hierarchy appears to be the only form of order that he recognises. The Trinity itself is hierarchically ordered (though without subordination of one Person to another!) and it forms the model for all other hierarchies (Hex. 21-23). In spite of his denials this lends a decidedly subordinationist tone to his doctrines of God and creation.
11. A corollary of this is that he defends the Platonic doctrine of the ontological priority of universals against Aristotle.
12. Thus he rules out the concept of analogia entis, at least as it is commonly understood today.
13. Quinn has based this summary on statements in 1 Sent. 3.1.un4, 3.2.2.3, and Qu.disp.trin. 1.1.ad9.
14. This may be an allusion to the teachings of Roger Bacon who was silenced by the Franciscan Order in the year that Bonaventure became Minister General.
15. He classifies the forms of terrestrial creatures thus: substantial forms (the forms of inanimate bodies); irrational souls (the forms of plants and animals, sometimes subdivided into vegetative and sensitive souls); and rational souls (the forms of human bodies) (Quinn 1973, 235- 316). He distinguishes the human soul from lower forms on the basis of their origination: irrational souls are produced by the power of nature, from seminal reasons, whereas rational souls, since they are spiritual substances, are immortal and hence must be the direct creation of God (Brev. 2.9.4).
16. Thus he anticipates Teilhard's concept of the hominisation of the cosmos.
17. However he undermines his insistence on a physical resurrection by stipulating that the resurrection body be celestial as opposed to corporeal. He outlines a threefold glorification of the resurrection body to fit it for existence in Paradise: a glorification which includes its endowment with the attributes of spiritual substance (Brev. 7.7.1). His conclusion is that the resurrection body "resembles the heavenly bodies for by

- these qualities a heavenly body is removed in degree from the four elements" (Brev. 7.7.4). Since the four elements pertain to the terrestrial creation, this is virtually a denial of physical resurrection.
18. Both speak of the image of God in terms of rectitude. In Bonaventure, however, it refers to the rightness of God to which the human soul is conformed. When it is thus conformed to rightness (rectitudo), the soul is made upright or right (rectus), and his dominion over creation also becomes upright so that man is truly ruler (rector) and king (rex).
 19. He was certainly familiar with such a concept and says of St Francis that "When he considered the primordial source of all things, he was filled with even more abundant piety, calling creatures, no matter how small, by the name of brother or sister, because he knew they had the same source as himself" (Leg.mai. 8.6).
 20. This special relationship between humankind and the second Person of the Trinity is used by Bonaventure as a justification for the fact that the Son became incarnate when any or all of the Persons could have done so (Brev. 4.1.4).
 21. These analogies are inconsistent in one important respect. He never suggests a collapse of the rational soul into God, or of the Trinity into Christ. However, he apparently has no such difficulty when it comes to a collapse of the nonhuman creation into humanity.
 22. The best known is his Itinerarium in which the three-fold division is transformed into six ways of contemplating God (corresponding to the six wings of the Seraph, Itin. prol.3) by the simple device of talking about contemplation of God through, and in, his vestiges, etc. By adding a seventh book on the ultimate repose of the soul he is able to make the whole correspond to the seven days of creation (a pattern which reappears in a still more elaborate form in the Collationes in Hexaemeron). A quite different elaboration of the basic pattern is to be found in Triplici via. Here the three ways are each applied to three spiritual exercises, resulting in three ends (which parallel the threefold angelic hierarchy).
 23. This understanding of dominion is reminiscent of Augustine (an approach which Paul Santmire has labelled contemplative dominion).
 24. Reformed thought was not the source of the mechanistic world picture. Bonaventure used the metaphors of machine and art to describe the Creator's handiwork and the organic and mechanistic metaphors existed side by side throughout the Middle Ages. In any case, it is arguable that the apparent dominance of the mechanistic view after the Reformation is to some extent an artefact created by looking only at developments in the physical sciences (Glacken 1967, 391).
 25. However, as we shall see, Calvin's theology remains sufficiently anthropocentric for him to overlook the implications for the nonhuman creation.

26. It is worth noting that Calvin used only verbal forms in speaking of the being of God. Torrance comments that, "Calvin's doctrine of the living God is in complete contrast to the Aristotelian and Scholastic conception of the divine Being" (Torrance 1949, 29). For Calvin, the Christian God was primarily the living God. Furthermore 'living' and 'trine' were correlative terms.
27. He is aware of the trinitarian interpretation of elohim in Gn. 1:1. However, he rejects it since it could be seen as relativising the distinctions within the Godhead, thus lending support to the Sabellian heresy.
28. Calvin could not have been unaware that 'virtue' was commonly appropriated to the Holy Spirit in the theological systems of his predecessors.
29. This suggests a possible trinitarian development of the doctrine of sustenance by the appropriation of different aspects of that work to different Persons of the Trinity.
30. Admittedly he expresses this in terms reminiscent of Augustinian utilitarianism:

And concerning inanimate objects we ought to hold that, although each one has by nature been endowed with its own property, yet it does not exercise its own power except in so far as it is directed by God's ever-present hand. These are, thus, nothing but instruments to which God continually imparts as much effectiveness as he wills, and according to his own purpose bends and turns them to either one action or another. (Inst. I.16.2)

However, this is a less damaging instrumentalism than that of Augustine. For Calvin it merely reflects the subordination of all created reality, including human-kind, to the purposes of God.
31. This is often seen as greatly exacerbating the problem of evil but it should be remembered that the context is one of unshakeable trust in God. For Calvin and his contemporaries the effect of this denial was to give meaning to what one suffered at the hands of one's enemies.
32. Calvin did not intend this to be taken as an exhaustive definition of the human soul. As he says, "I shall not strongly oppose anyone who wants to classify the powers of the soul in some other way" (Inst. 1.15.6). However he did believe that the consensus of philosophers and theologians would agree that understanding and will were the two fundamental faculties of the soul.
33. He uses static terminology for the image of God in man more often than Torrance 1949 suggests. However, this static terminology appears mainly when he is stressing the superiority of humankind over the animals (Stauffer 1977, 201).
34. As we have seen in the section on Bonaventure this understanding of imago dei does not originate with Calvin. However, it remained subordinate to the traditional Augustinian view until the Reformer's

- dramatic change in emphasis in the doctrine of God.
35. As Klaaren points out, Calvin's anthropology and epistemology entail a radical revision of the microcosm-macrocosm relationship (Klaaren 1977, 45).
 36. This explains his notorious statement that, "it can be said reverently, provided that it proceeds from a reverent mind, that nature is God" (Inst. 1.5.5). Nature is God only in the sense that it is charged with God's glory. It reveals God to him who beholds it with the eye of faith.
 37. Is it significant that Calvin, who sings the praises of Astronomy when it is pursued for the glory of God, pointedly ignores the novelties of Copernicus? (Stauffer 1977, 187).

CHAPTER 4
GOD AND NATURE
IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

1. THE AUGUSTINIAN LEGACY IN THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL TILLICH

Paul Tillich often stressed his indebtedness to Augustine¹, e.g., in his discussions of the early Franciscans, and in his treatment of the two types of philosophy of religion. However, it should be noted that his Augustinianism was mediated to him through a tortuous line of descent including the mysticism of Eckhart, Boehme and Schelling, and the absolute idealism of Hegel².

In his own view what marks him out as Augustinian is his espousal of existentialism as opposed to essentialism³. He is an existentialist in the sense that he is aware that essence is never more than partially or ambiguously present in reality. However, his theology has also been influenced by modern existentialists, notably Nietzsche and Heidegger, e.g., in his understanding of time (Annala 1982). Their influence is also visible in his existential epistemology which, as we shall see, has a restrictive effect on his doctrine of providence. But for Tillich, the main attraction of contemporary existentialism was its sense of

the distortion and alienation which constitute human existence (a sense which it shared with Augustinianism).

Another factor which marks him out as an Augustinian is his preference for what he calls an ontological philosophy of religion as opposed to a cosmological one. A corollary of this is his preference for realism (in the Platonic sense) as against nominalism (and its modern successors, empiricism and scientific realism).

In spite of this legacy, a number of theologians, while expressing various reservations about his system, look to him for the basis of a theological response to the ecological crisis. His extensive use of the concept of life in his later theology, his belief that God is intimately related to nature (e.g., Tillich 1967, 126), and his insistence that theology must always address itself to the issues of the society in which we live⁴ combine to suggest that his system might lend itself to the development of a theology of nature⁵. This opinion receives additional support from his own awareness of the fragility of our environment, and his belief that the ecological crisis was sufficiently serious to warrant a theological response (e.g., Tillich 1973, 55-66).

(a) God as Being-itself

One characteristic of Tillich's theology is the way in which he consistently equates ontology and protology. His understanding of ontology has clearly been influenced by Heidegger: like Heidegger he holds that the question of

being entails a questioning subject. But what does he mean by protology? The term is sometimes used to refer to the doctrine of creation but, for Tillich its significance lies in its etymology: it is the scientific study of to proton (a term used by Plotinus to denote the One, and equated with the Holy Trinity or God the Father by Christian Platonists). This term corresponds to his use of the term das Erstes: that which is ontologically ultimate. The science of being is the science of the One. Putting it another way, he has equated ontology and theology. This equation is reflected in the method of correlation which determines the structure of his entire theological system: existential questions are to be given theological answers⁶. As Lewis Ford points out, this starting point may be regarded as a minimal, but nevertheless formidable, natural theology, and, "On its strength alone Tillich is prepared to reject every natural or revealed theology which insists that God be conceived as a highest being" (Ford 1971, 264).

Following St Augustine and the Neoplatonists, Tillich operates with a tripartite ontology. The three distinct levels of being in his system are the One, finite being, and nothingness.

In identifying ontology and protology (or theology) he explicitly makes the One the starting point of his system. This One he calls Being-itself. It is neither an object in our world nor an idea in our subjectivity. Rather, Being-itself is the depth (both the ground and the abyss) of all finite being and, as such, is logically and ontologically

prior to the subject-object cleavage. It is the ultimate source, ground and fullness of all finite being. Furthermore Being-itself is identified with God. Or rather, "The religious word for what is called the ground of being is God" (Tillich 1953, 156).

His Systematic Theology clearly stands in the Augustinian tradition which gives treatment of the one God priority over the Trinity. Indeed his explicit treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity is relegated to a few pages halfway through the last volume (Tillich 1964c, 301-14). However, in spite of this lack of direct reference to the doctrine, an examination of his trinitarianism in relation to his doctrines of creation, providence, and life is justified by a dialectical streak running right through his system. This dialectical element is so closely related to his understanding of the Trinity that it has led to the suggestion that his system is implicitly trinitarian (Dourley 1975, 5, 108, 159).

What Tillich has to say about the one God is largely consonant with the Augustinian tradition. However, he departs from it at one important point. He does not attempt to defend the doctrine of the immutability of God. Instead he introduces two important qualifications of Being-itself: God is love, and God is the power of being (Thatcher 1978, 40). Both suggest a more dynamic concept of God than is permitted by classical understandings of immutability. Thus he is able to evade the charge of Neoplatonism by insisting that the eschatological return of finite being to its divine

ground enriches God.

The concept of God as power of being relates to the experience of God as the abyss of self and world. If, with Tillich, we accept Rudolf Otto's definition of religious experience as mysterium tremendum et fascinosum, then the experience of God as the power of being corresponds to the tremendum. Similarly the experience of God as love relates to the experience of him as the ground of being and to the term fascinosum in Otto's definition⁷. Together they anticipate Tillich's way of developing a trinitarian concept of God: God is living rather than an undifferentiated monad.

(b) The dialectics of the living God

Tillich is highly critical of the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity (Tillich 1964c, 305). However, because of his stress on the living God, he is unwilling simply to drop trinitarianism in favour of an undifferentiated monotheism.

In his search for an adequate modern interpretation of the trinitarian symbols he is struck by the apparent frequency with which trinities occur in the world's religions (Tillich 1953, 143). This lends weight to his view that trinitarianism should be seen as the most adequate way of speaking of God as living. Trinitarianism is not a fact (or even implication) of revelation but simply a frequently recurring way of talking about the dialectics of life (Tillich 1957, 143): "an attempt to speak of the living God, the God in whom the ultimate and the concrete are united" (Tillich 1953, 228). Or, more sharply, "The

doctrine of the Trinity does not affirm the logical nonsense that three is one and one is three; it describes in dialectical terms the inner movement of the divine life as an eternal separation from itself and return to itself" (Tillich 1953, 56). This threefoldness is, in effect, a linguistic artefact of the dialectics of life. It is a side-effect of any attempt to speak concretely about a dynamic reality.

For Tillich, all life processes are dialectical. Life itself is the process of actualisation of being, a synthesis of power (abyss, depth, chaos, novelty) and form (order, intelligibility, meaning). His dialectical trinitarianism follows immediately from this understanding of life: adequate discourse about the living God is appropriately structured in an analogous way.

Thus the three principles or moments (never Persons) of the divine life are self-identity, self-alteration and return to self. God as self-identity is the fount of Godhead. This is the abyssmal dimension of God: God as naked power. In order to be a living God this God cannot exist in isolation but must also exist in self-alteration as its own antithesis. This is so because he adheres to the principle of coincidentia oppositorum: nothing is revealed, expressed, or fulfilled except by its opposite.

The antithesis of God as self-identity is God understood as meaning or form: the divine Logos⁸. It is at this point that the distinctively Christian element of the doctrine is introduced. For Tillich, this consists in the

identification by the early church of the Christ with the Logos (Tillich 1957, 143), and our trinitarian discourse has content only so long as it is rooted in our experience of the New Being in the Christ, and of the living God (Tillich 1957, 143f). However, some of his ways of expressing this identification raise the spectre of adoptionism. For example, "there is one man in whom God found his image undistorted," who is, therefore, representative of human-kind, and "who for this reason, is called the Son and the Christ" (Tillich 1973, 64).

Finally, the actuality of God is to be located in the return to self. Power and form are united and given actuality in the Spirit (Tillich 1953, 250f). Thus, for Tillich, God is Spirit. The Spirit is the divine reality which transcends and reconciles in itself the incomplete opposites of Father and Son: "The divine life is the dynamic unity of depth and form. . . . In religious language the dynamic unity of both elements is called "Spirit"" (Tillich 1953, 156). Or, "God as living is God fulfilled in himself and therefore spirit. God is Spirit. This is the most embracing, direct, and unrestricted symbol for the divine life" (Tillich 1953, 249).

'God is Spirit' is another way of saying that God is the fulfilment of life. Thus not only is Spirit the most embracing symbol for the living God but it forms the basis for all trinitarian statements. This is his justification for delaying his explicit treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity until after his account of life and spirit. But he

goes even further when he adds that, "Both power and meaning are contained in it and united in it . . . The third principle is in a way the whole" (Tillich 1953, 251).

This stress on God as Spirit to the exclusion of the other Persons suggests that his understanding of God is fundamentally unipersonal. Other features of his thought also point to this conclusion: specifically, his avoidance of 'Person' in favour of 'principle' or 'moment'; his insistence that Augustine's use of persona was not identical with the modern understanding of person , and, indeed that the personal distinctions are without content (Tillich 1957, 144); and his suggestion that the trinitarian moments be thought of as characteristics of the one divine life (Tillich 1953, 157). That the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity has been seriously weakened by Tillich is further suggested by the adoptionist tendency referred to above. We may conclude that Thatcher is right when he denounces Tillich's equation of dialectical thought and trinitarian thought as an error and a confusion⁹ (Thatcher 1978, 91).

However, other features in his theology raise doubts that he envisaged even a unipersonal deity. For example, he agreed with Einstein that God is not a Person (Tillich 1964a, 130). He believes that treating God as a person reduces him to an object: it denies his ontological priority over everything that partakes of the subject-object cleavage. Thus it would be a denial of his most fundamental definition of God. He prefers to present God as the hyper-personal ground which embraces all finite being, including

personal being¹⁰. For Tillich, trinitarianism functions primarily as a way of symbolically underlining the fullness of this divine life.

We have already seen, in the cases of Augustine and Bonaventure, that such an understanding of God can promote a negative attitude to the nonhuman dimensions of creation. This raises the question of whether a Christian doctrine of creation, and hence a properly Christian understanding of the natural world, can be maintained in conjunction with such an understanding of God.

(c) Life and the living God

Tillich never uses nature as a category in his Systematic Theology¹¹. However, all that is usually denoted by this term is subsumed under the broader category of life, which he treats at some length in Volume 3.

In The New Being, he rejects the mechanistic and reductionistic understanding of life found in classical physics and biology: "Life is not a machine well-constructed by its builder and running according to the forces and laws of its own machinery." Rather, it is "a creative and destructive process in which freedom and destiny, chance and necessity, responsibility and tragedy are mixed with each other in everything and in every moment" (Tillich 1956, 57).

His formal definition is that life is the actuality of being (Tillich 1964c, 12). Thus it becomes impossible to exclude any aspect of created reality from the category of life. For example, "the genesis of stars and rocks, their

growth as well as their decay, must be called a life process" (Tillich 1964c, 12). In effect he seems to be proposing a sophisticated form of hylozoism.

Clearly the application of this category of thought to all finite being brings all things into an intimate relationship with the living God. All finite being bears the hallmarks of the same dialectical process which characterises Tillich's God: the movement from self-identity, through self-alteration, to self-fulfilment (Tillich 1957, 90). This is highlighted by his identification of the telos, or fulfilment, of life: with spirit.

In the context of his discussion of life, he takes the important step of rejecting the notion of a hierarchy of being. This is particularly striking since it is a prominent feature of most of the theological and philosophical systems to which he expresses indebtedness.

He regards any form of hierarchy (even the perception of hierarchies in nature) as radically opposed to what the Reformation stood for. Thus he insists that, "Both the Protestant and the democratic principles negate the mutually independent and hierarchically organized levels of the power of being" (Tillich 1964c, 14). Hierarchy suggests that the different levels of reality can only relate to each other in terms of superiority or inferiority. Different levels can only interact heteronomously as master and slave¹². He demonstrates this by examining the application of hierarchical thinking to various realms of reality. He

argues that the relation of the organic to the inorganic, thus understood, can only be seen in terms of reductionism or vitalism. Similarly, he perceives hierarchical thinking at the heart of other long-standing controversies such as that between materialism and psychological dualism, and religion and secular culture.

In place of a hierarchy of levels Tillich proposes a new metaphor: that of life as a unity of many coordinated ontological dimensions. In his view this eliminates the tendency to interpret the interaction of different dimensions as interference.

His proposal to treat life as a multidimensional unity also implies an attack on the tendency to dissociate human history from its natural context which is so often a feature of hierarchical thinking. This is promising for anyone interested in restoring theology of nature to its rightful place. But the question arises of how Tillich himself relates these different dimensions of finite being.

He retains the division of the created order into a variety of realms defined according to which dimension of life is dominant. Specifically, he distinguishes the material, vegetable, animal and historical (or spiritual) realms, i.e., those aspects of the created order in which the inorganic, the organic, the psychological (the dimension of inner awareness), and the spiritual dimensions dominate respectively¹³. Of these the one of most interest to Tillich is the last: the personal-communal or spiritual dimension. It is at this point that history and genuine

novelty emerge explicitly into creation.

All this may sound similar to the older hierarchies of being but the difference lies in the absence of any suggestion of domination of higher over lower. Each new dimension emerges from and remains embedded within the context of previously existing dimensions¹⁴.

Of particular significance for our present discussion is Tillich's insistence on the divine involvement in this process of emergence. The appearance of a new dimension depends on the development of a particular constellation of conditions in the preceding, conditioning dimension; and this development "is a matter of the interplay of freedom and destiny under the directing creativity of God" (Tillich 1964c, 26).

His rejection of the metaphor of hierarchy by no means excludes statements about the relative value of different beings from his own system. On the contrary he asserts that "Historical man adds the historical dimension to all other dimensions which are presupposed and contained in his being. He is the highest grade from the point of view of valuation" (Tillich 1964c, 17). It should be emphasised that he does not mean 'most perfect' when he says 'highest'. Humankind, precisely by virtue of its being highest can become less perfect than any other creature (Tillich 1964c, 38).

What then are his criteria for determining the relative grades of the ontological dimensions of life? They are based on the three functions of life: "self-integration under the principle of centredness, self-creation under the

principle of growth, and self-transcendence under the principle of sublimity" (Tillich 1964c, 34). Thus the highest finite being is the one with the greatest capacity to manifest the ontological polarities of life: individualisation and participation, dynamics and form (life and death; culture), freedom and destiny. As such humankind has the greatest capacity to assimilate the world: "the world is indefinitely open to man; everything can become a content of the self" (Tillich 1964c, 43). Indeed, "man does not have only environment; he has world, the structured unity of all possible content" (Tillich 1964c, 38).

Tillich unashamedly puts most emphasis on the historical dimension: the realm of spirit. This is the ultimate dimension of life. It is the dimension in which genuine novelty can occur; the level at which life can find its fulfilment; and the level at which the justification of human history, the earth itself, and even the entire cosmos becomes possible (Tillich 1973, 64f.). Even if we are the only rational creatures in the universe, the threat of nuclear self-destruction cannot detract from this:

a being will have at least appeared once, in the billions of years of the universe, towards whose creation all the forces of life on earth worked together, and in whom the image of the divine Ground of all life was present. At least once, a living being will have come into existence, in whom life achieved its highest possibility--spirit. (Tillich 1973, 64)

This is reminiscent of Schelling, in whose nature philosophy progress "reaches its goal in man" (Tillich 1974, 56). The human creature retains a crucial role in Tillich's system: in that he presupposes and contains all the

dimensions of life, man is the microcosm.

(d) Creation and the living God

Superimposed upon this understanding of life is a very strong sense of the ambiguity of created existence. Tillich has inherited from contemporary existentialism an overwhelmingly negative valuation of finite existence. Thus Dourley argues that, "Tillich sees all of created reality outside of the divinity as a mixture of essence and existence in which essence is always partially hidden, always distorted, and yet always retentive of its ability to shine through its existential distortion" (Dourley 1975, 57). Tillich himself puts it thus:

being a creature means both to be rooted in the creative ground of the divine life and to actualize one's self through freedom. Creation is fulfilled in the creaturely self-realization which simultaneously is freedom and destiny. But it is fulfilled through separation from the creative ground through a break between existence and essence. Creaturely freedom is the point at which creation and the fall coincide. (Tillich 1953, 256)

Here we have his doctrine of creation in a nutshell. Creation is not a story, not an account of past events, historical or mythological. It is Christian theology's central symbol for the relationship between God and all that is not God (Tillich 1953, 254). "The doctrine of creation does not describe an event. It points to the situation of creatureliness and to its correlate, the divine creativity" (Tillich 1953, 252f.). It is an active relationship rather than an action: it stands for the eternal calling of being out of non-being¹⁵. One result of this is that Tillich

tends to lose creation in preservation and providence¹⁶ (Tillich 1953, 267). Thus he has departed from the traditional protestant approach which is to separate creation and providence from the being of God and to deal with them either as one mode of the divine activity (e.g., Barth) or as a transitional doctrine linking the doctrine of God with the doctrine of the creature (e.g., Dorner). Instead, in a move reminiscent of mediaeval scholasticism, he has expounded providence as an element of the divine creativity within his treatment of the reality of God.

Why does Tillich choose this approach? The answer probably lies in his consistent use of the method of correlation¹⁷ rather than the influence of the early Franciscans. One can clearly see this method at work in the large-scale structure of his theology, though it is not always obvious in the case of individual theological statements. Nevertheless, he insists that every theological statement is the answer to a corresponding existential question. If this is the case here, then the doctrines of creation and providence must be an essential part of any theological answer to the question of finite being. In a sermon on this issue, Tillich puts the question thus¹⁸,

Life, personal and historical, is a creative and destructive process in which freedom and destiny, chance and necessity, responsibility and tragedy are mixed with each other in everything and in every moment. These tensions . . . drive us to the question of a courage which can accept life without being conquered by it, and this is the question of providence. (Tillich 1956, 57)

In spite of the unusual location of his treatment of

the doctrines of creation and providence, Tillich's division of the content is familiar. He adopts a conventional tripartite division of the material into creatio ex nihilo, preservation, and consummation. However, his unusual terminology reminds us that he thinks of these as in terms of divine attributes rather than activities: he speaks of God's originating, sustaining, and directing creativity.

(i) Originating creativity: God is the creative source of all being. He is the ground of every existent. In this way Tillich establishes a continuity of being between God and the world (Thatcher 1978, 39). God is immanent in creation in the sense that every finite existent participates in him. This continuity is underlined by the fact that, for Tillich, God as the power of being is also the power of nature¹⁹ (Tillich 1951, 113). Thus, in sharp contrast to the rational-objective view of nature associated with Descartes, he insists that "the apprehension of the inherent powers of nature is not a possible task for rational discourse" (Tillich 1951, 115).

At the same time he is careful to insist that God is not limited by the totality of existents. Actual creation cannot fully express its creative source. In this sense, God remains transcendent, free with respect to his creation. Thus Tillich avoids (to his own satisfaction) any charge of pantheism (Dourley 1975, 62).

But what does God create? Creaturely existence is distorted, alienated from its creative ground. Tillich claims that creation and fall coincide in the freedom of the

creature (Tillich 1953, 256). Does this mean that God creates a fallen world? Or is the Fall due to the rebellion or irrational resistance of free finite spirits (as in Origen or Schelling)? Tillich tries to avoid giving affirmative answers to either of these questions. The creation which God judges to be very good is not creation as it has been actualised. God's good creation is creation in its essential being. But this essential creation must still be actualised if it is to be creation in the usual sense, and if it is to achieve its telos. Actualised creation coincides with estranged existence not because actualisation as such leads to estrangement (this would be the Origenist view) but because human freedom, as a matter of fact, always distorts existence (Smith 1984). Thus estrangement, or sin, is not a necessary condition of existence but rather an almost universally realised possibility²⁰.

However, this alienation is also the means whereby finite being, seeks to achieve self-actualisation. Thus the Fall is identified with the creature's free choice of self-actualisation. Significantly Tillich regards this freedom of decision as the locus of irrationality: the transition from essence to existence has no basis in the essential goodness of the structure (Tillich 1957, 91). This recalls Schelling's division of the Ungrund into two equally eternal beginnings: Yes (the divine self, the ideal, light, freedom) and No (nature in God, reality, darkness, necessity). The latter is that which gives rise to all things through its eternal struggle with its positive counterpart; a struggle

which like the transition from essence to existence has no basis in rationality (Tillich 1974, 94).

In other words, the creature is a tertium quid between Being-itself and non-being. As Thatcher points out, this understanding of created being is common not only to Tillich and Schelling but also to Eckhart and Augustine (and, we might add, Bonaventure) (Thatcher 1978, 33).

(ii) Sustaining creativity: For Tillich the doctrine of preservation speaks of "the relation of God to the creature in its actualized freedom" (Tillich 1953, 261). He wants to retain the doctrine but he is fearful of some of the inferences which have been drawn from it. Specifically he is anxious to avoid any hint of deism, any suggestion that God might be "a being alongside the world" (Tillich 1953, 262).

The approach which he adopts (and which he traces back to Augustine) is to treat preservation as continuous creativity. This coheres with his treatment of creativity as a divine attribute: "God is essentially creative, and therefore he is creative in every moment of temporal existence, giving the power of being to everything that has being out of the creative ground of the divine life" (Tillich 1953, 262).

However the distinguishing mark of sustaining creativity, in Tillich's view, is that it relates to the static element in finite being, to the unchanging structures of reality: "Faith in God's sustaining creativity is the faith in the continuity of the structure of reality as the

basis for being and acting" (Tillich 1953, 262). The danger of this approach is that, if it appears in conjunction with a doctrine of directing creativity which focusses exclusively on the human (on the personal-communal dimension of life), it may result in the nonhuman being regarded as basically static. Thus it may sustain the dichotomy between nature and history in direct contradiction to the rationale behind treating life as a multidimensional unity.

(iii) Directing creativity: This is the dimension of God's creativity which has to do with change, novelty, and evolution. We have already noted that Tillich regarded God's directing creativity as intimately involved in the emergence of one dimension of life from another. It is this aspect of the divine creativity which he identifies as the classical Christian doctrine of providence. Its importance in his thought is clear from his tendency to speak of it in all-inclusive terms, e.g., "Faith in providence is not PART of the Christian faith . . . FAITH IN PROVIDENCE IS FAITH ALTOGETHER" (Tillich 1956, 53; cf. Tillich 1953, 157, Tillich 1962, 109).

As with preservation, Tillich is concerned about what he regards as the widespread misunderstanding of providence. Indeed it would not be an exaggeration to say that he sees this as a major cause of contemporary atheism. Thus he devotes much of his section on providence to attacking erroneous views.

He begins with a critical examination of the notion of the purpose of creation in which he seeks to eliminate the

idea that there is something which God can achieve only through an act of creation. To speak in these terms would, in his view, be to reduce God to the status of a finite being alongside creation: a process which he regards as fundamentally atheistic. In order to emphasise that the divine creativity has no purpose beyond itself, he proposes to replace the idea of the purpose of creation with that of the telos of creativity.

He then turns his attention to "Fate and Providence," adopting the traditional opposition of the two concepts: "Faith in providence is faith 'in spite of'--in spite of the darkness of fate and the meaninglessness of existence" (Tillich 1953, 264). However, he does not deny the existence of fate altogether, but sees it, rather, as an aspect of destiny. It is our experience of frustration in the face of the apparent inexorability of creaturely causality (the static structures of reality sustained by God), and it is this experience which is overcome by faith in providence. By thus restricting fate to the sphere of existence he deprives it of ultimate significance and rules out the tragic view of life beloved of classical thought.

This discussion of fate introduces what he regards as the chief misunderstanding of providence, namely its treatment as a rational principle. The assumption of, and search for, reasons underlying God's directing creativity is, of course, closely connected with the idea that creation has a purpose. He analyses this approach into three main ways of treating providence: the teleological way, the

harmonistic way, and the dialectical way. From Tillich's viewpoint, their most significant common feature is an invasion of theology by autonomous human reason with a consequent loss of the paradoxical dimension of the doctrine. This renders the doctrine of providence empirically falsifiable and he believes that the catastrophes of the twentieth century have been more than sufficient to falsify such a doctrine (Tillich 1953, 266). In contrast to this, Tillich holds that, "It is the paradox of the belief in providence that, just when the conditions of a situation are destroying the believer, the divine condition gives him a certainty which transcends the destruction" (Tillich 1953, 268).

In addition to this explicit criticism, his entire approach to divine creativity is opposed to the treatment of providence as a rational principle. He renders the question of the contingency or necessity of creation meaningless by equating the divine creativity with the divine life. Thus the only reason for creation lies in the fact that God is the living God. Furthermore, since the doctrine of creation is now located within that of the reality of God, the sort of questions raised by rational principles of providence are ruled out as introducing an unacceptable degree of separation between God and creation. It is significant that elsewhere Tillich regards such dualism as the root cause of the tragic view of life which Christianity has overcome but to which a rational view of providence inevitably returns.

Two positive affirmations about providence arise

directly from Tillich's critique of the rational principle of providence: Providence is the motive force for the telos of creativity, and any expression of it must be paradoxical²¹.

Central to his doctrine of providence is the concept of the telos of creativity. He defines this singularly opaque term as, "the inner aim of fulfilling in actuality what is beyond potentiality and actuality in the divine life" (Tillich 1953, 264). Given that "what is beyond potentiality and actuality" is the divine life itself, Tillich appears to mean that this inner aim is nothing other than the self-actualisation of the divine life in creation. This is supported by his statement that, "The divine life is creative, actualizing itself in inexhaustible abundance" (Tillich 1953, 252). Thus providence or directing creativity is the divine urge which manipulates every creature towards this end: a statement which clearly leads to a contradiction of his remarks about the purpose of creation.

In his positive treatment of providence Tillich makes two more major points:

First, providence is a divine activity: "Providence is a permanent activity of God . . . he always directs everything towards its fulfilment" (Tillich 1953, 266). The Christian God may not be treated as an omniscient spectator after the fashion of deism. This is in line with his rejection of the idea of God as a being alongside creation. Superficially it resembles the traditional view. However,

the qualification 'permanent' distinguishes his approach from some traditional doctrines of providence which see it as an activity bounded by creation and the eschaton (God directing the created order from the former to the latter). For Tillich, providence knows no such bounds. The divine self-actualisation in creation is eternal.

Second, God acts exclusively through creaturely causality:

God's directing creativity always creates through the freedom of man and through the spontaneity and structural wholeness of all creatures. Providence works . . . through the polar elements of being . . . All existential conditions are included in God's directing creativity. (Tillich 1953, 266)

Tillich rejects the deterministic tendency towards omnicausality (e.g., in Zwingli and Spinoza). But he goes further than is strictly necessary to protect the reality of secondary causes in order to exclude interventionism (or supernaturalism). As he says, "Providence is not interference" (Tillich 1953, 267). By making this assertion he ensures that the notion of providence as divine activity remains paradoxical. It is not possible to single out events in human history as specific acts of God (which would not only lay providence open to falsification but also present God as a finite being acting within the confines of finite existence). By the same token, God has to be regarded as immanent lest his activity be regarded as a violation of the structures of creation, a force tending towards disintegration and chaos (Dourley 1975, 114).

Tillich rounds off his positive exposition with a

number of statements which relate these points back to the central idea of the telos of creativity. Providence is "a quality of every constellation of conditions . . . which . . . 'lures' toward fulfilment" (Tillich 1953, 267). Not only is it a permanent activity but it is a universal one bringing the promise of ultimate fulfilment to every situation no matter how fate-ridden. Tillich underlines this universality by saying that it is, "the divine condition" which is present in every group of finite conditions and in the totality of finite conditions" (Tillich 1953, 267).

This concept of the telos of creativity warrants careful re-examination. Similar concepts appear in other contemporary treatments of divine action. Process theology, for example, reinstates a form of final causality in its use of the concept of the lure of God. Or one may cite eschatological theologies in which a future God draws a god-less present towards himself. Each of these examples bears a certain resemblance to the Hegelian cunning of the idea. In Tillich's case, although he is highly critical of the Hegelian dialectical approach to providence, his criticism is focussed on its rational character rather than its content. He recognises buried in the Hegelian approach, the basis for a properly paradoxical treatment of providence.

What then is the telos, the end, of God's creativity? The final act is instigated by the grace of God who enables the essentialisation of finite being (this is the fundamental meaning of new being). This is a return from

alienated existence to a state of complete participation in the divine life. It entails the fulfilment of life through the overcoming of the ontological polarities which form the basis of alienated existence. The end result is the perfection of creation and the divine self-fulfilment²². However, this has to be thought of in dialectical rather than historical terms. There is no question of Christ coming in glory at some future historical epoch. History is not a simple linear progress from creation to eschaton.

The reason for this is to be found in his understanding of time and eternity. He rejects both of the traditional concepts of eternity, namely that it is either timelessness or endless time. Instead he offers us an existential reinterpretation of Boethius' definition of eternity: eternity is the transcendent unity of all three modes of created time (Annala 1982, 121). As for time, Tillich adopts the subjectivist approach of modern existentialism: time is a form of sensible intuition which is given its content by our existential concerns. Thus there is one supremely important instance of time: the extended existential now. Whenever the anxiety of temporal existence is overcome²³, time is transformed into eternity. This understanding causes him to modify the traditional linear model of history as follows:

I would suggest a curve which comes from above, moves down as well as ahead, reaches the deepest point which is the nunc existiale, the "existential now," and returns in an analogous way to that from which it came, going ahead as well as going up. This curve can be drawn in every moment of experienced time, and it can also be seen as the diagram for temporality as a whole.

It implies the creation of the temporal, the beginning of time, and the return of the temporal to the eternal, the end of time. But the end of time is not conceived in terms of a definite moment either in the past or in the future. Beginning from and ending in the eternal are not matters of a determinable moment in physical time but rather a process going on in every moment, as does the divine creation. There is always creation and consummation, beginning and end. (Tillich 1964c, 449)

And this cycle of descent and return is the work of providence:

God determines every moment so that in it an experience of the ultimate is possible, . . . For the individual human being, providence means that in every moment of the time process, there is the possibility of reaching toward the kingdom of God. (Tillich 1967, 38)

His account of creation, existence and new being clearly has the same dialectical structure as that of life and the living God. This structure also resembles the Neo-Platonic schema of descent from the divine unity to the vicious multiplicity of finite existence and the subsequent return to unity.

(iv) Creation and Tillich's 'trinitarianism': The procession of creation from God is analogous to the intra-trinitarian procession, and the clear threefold division of divine creativity into originating, sustaining, and directing creativity offers Tillich an excellent opportunity to make some connection between them. He even goes as far as to say that,

Since the divine life is essentially creative, all three modes of time must be used in symbolizing it. God has created the world, he is creative in the present moment, and he will creatively fulfil his telos. Therefore we must speak of originating creation, sustaining creation, and directing creation. (Tillich 1953, 253)

Thus far, but no further. With Augustine, Tillich

insists that, "Since God is a person, and that means a unity, all acts of God toward the outside (ad extra) are always acts of the whole trinity, even the act of the incarnation" (Tillich 1968, 117). This statement recalls us to the practical monotheism which has dominated western theology. Far from establishing a permanent relationship between the triune God and creation, a relationship which could form the basis of a theology of nature, Tillich's system suggests an eschatological pantheism in which God's re-essentialisation of creation is identified with his self-fulfilment (Dourley 1975, 69f.).

(e) Prospects for a theology of nature

Does Tillich's system really promise the basis for a Christian theology of nature?

His doctrine of providence is clearly neutral with respect to God's activity in nature. He makes no reference to providential activity in nature as distinct from providential activity with respect to mankind. This silence does not, in itself, warrant the conclusion that Tillich neglects nature. However, it does require us to look more closely at his attitude to nature.

Neither is his avoidance of the term nature, in itself, an insuperable difficulty. He discards it for the sake of a coherent ontology rather than any doubts about the propriety or possibility of theological engagement with that which the word is commonly understood to denote.

Its content may be subsumed into his category of life.

Thus we are, in effect, inquiring into the possibility of developing a theology of the nonhuman dimensions of life. Tillich himself made little effort to develop this aspect of his work preferring to concentrate instead on spirit as the key dimension of life. However, the explicit rejection of a hierarchy of being does hold out some promise for a less anthropocentric approach to nature than has been traditional in Augustinianism²⁴. Whether such a development would actually achieve the desired results may, however, be questioned on several counts.

First, the rejection of the metaphor of a hierarchy has not removed from Tillich's thought the relative valuation of different levels of being. It has merely become implicit in his understanding of man as microcosm. However, as regards the relationship between humankind and the nonhuman, the concept of the microcosm is deeply ambiguous. It could denote the human as the representative participant in created being (the microcosm as mediator or priest of creation). On the other hand, it has also come to suggest that everything of significance about created being is recapitulated in man himself.

Second, Tillich retains the descent and return structure of Neoplatonic cosmology. He disavows the intellectualism associated with later Christian interpretations of this schema. Nevertheless it is strongly suggestive of a highly spiritualised view of salvation and fulfilment. Salvation is the return of creaturely existence to the realm of essential being. It entails transcending

the ontological polarities of finite existence so that full participation in Being-itself is again possible. But is such a re-essentialisation possible without leaving behind the nonhuman dimensions of creation?

Third, it is clear, on closer examination of his treatment of directing creativity that he shares with his contemporaries the limitations imposed by an existentialist epistemology. This becomes explicit in his treatment of theodicy. There he reminds us of his belief that,

All theological statements are existential: they imply the man who makes the statement or who asks the question. The creaturely existence of which theology speaks is "my" creaturely existence, and only on this basis is the consideration of creatureliness in general meaningful. (Tillich 1953, 269)

This is not as disastrous for a putative theology of nature as, say, Bultmann's position. Tillich combines his existentialism with a doctrine of participation which goes some way towards ameliorating the anthropocentrism of much modern existentialism. It is possible to speak theologically of others. To do so, "we must seek the point at which the destiny of others becomes our own destiny" (Tillich 1953, 270). That point is the participation of their being in our being. Tillich expands on this point as follows:

The principle of participation implies that every question concerning individual fulfilment must at the same time be a question concerning universal fulfilment. Neither can be separated from the other. The destiny of the individual cannot be separated from the destiny of the whole in which it participates. One might speak of a representative fulfilment or nonfulfilment, but beyond this one must refer to the creative unity of individualisation and participation in the depth of the divine life. (Tillich 1953, 270)

The individuation sought by existentialism stands not in opposition but in polar relation to participation in the whole. However, this is still not the end of the matter. He characteristically refuses to state explicitly the place of nature in theology. He is so consistent in this refusal that Konrad Stock speaks of his question regarding the participation of humanity and nature (Stock 1976).

Finally these doubts about the significance placed on the material creation by Tillich seem to be confirmed by his view of the telos of life. The immanent fulfilment of all life processes is spirit. His own neglect of the material aspects of life in favour of an account of spirit bears witness to this stress.

In conclusion, it may still be argued that Tillich's theology highlights certain of the ontological roots of the ecological crisis (Stumme 1984), thus allowing his followers to create a critique of the present situation. However, our analysis of his attitude to the natural world and its relationship with God suggests that it must be doubted whether his theological system is capable of yielding a positive Christian theology of nature.

2. THE TRINITY AND THE NONHUMAN CREATION IN THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH

If Tillich represents the contemporary continuation of the Augustinian tradition, Barth is the representative of the

Calvinist modification of that tradition.

The thrust of the thesis so far has been to suggest that a Christian understanding of God's providential care for the nonhuman creation is closely bound up with an appropriate concept of God. Thus some consideration of Karl Barth's contribution to theology is essential. He has re-awakened western Christians to the centrality of the Trinity in Christian dogmatics; and he has done this, not merely by returning to trinitarian speculation but by transforming it into a doctrine with a key hermeneutical function in the Reformed theological enterprise.

However, important as it is, the sheer extent of his treatment (extending through several hundred pages of the first part-volume of the Church Dogmatics and informing and pervading the entire structure of the rest) precludes anything but the sketchiest of outlines in this present work. What I propose to concentrate on here are those aspects of the doctrine with the greatest relevance for a Christian doctrine of creation and, hence, for a Christian understanding of nature, namely, his understanding of divine activity as trinitarian.

(a) The main contours of Barth's trinitarianism

The most striking feature of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity is its location. He rejects the traditional practice of treating it as the conclusion to a doctrine of God. Instead he locates it in the Prolegomena to his dogmatics, arguing that it provides the only satisfactory answer to the

question, "Who is the subject of revelation?" He develops his trinitarian answer both by means of an analysis of the concept of revelation and with reference to the witness of Holy Scripture.

The main effect of this relocation of the doctrine is to create the basis for a distinctively Christian doctrine of God (and, hence, a distinctively Christian dogmatics). By refusing to begin with an abstract consideration of the one God he hopes to avoid the importation of concepts drawn from natural theology or secular philosophical discussions of the Absolute. He assumes that the only valid source of Christian knowledge (as opposed to speculation) is the form and content of revelation itself. As Richard Roberts points out, "God's act in Jesus Christ is not merely the exclusive source of the knowledge of God but also supremely inclusive, for in it the Trinity of God is revealed and along with this the total theological potential of Christian dogma" (Roberts 1980, 81).

The implications for a theology of nature are clear. For Barth and his disciples, any theological engagement with the nonhuman creation must be governed throughout and ultimately limited by the Christian revelation. Because of the inclusiveness of revelation any doctrine of creation or providence must be derived from that revelation and hence it must itself be distinctively Christian (i.e., trinitarian). Barth himself uses just such an argument to restrict the scope of his own doctrine of creation to a theological anthropology:

by the nature of its object dogmatics has neither the occasion nor the duty to become a technical cosmology or a Christian world-view. Were it to do so, it would be losing its way in a sphere essentially foreign to it. Its true object is the revealed, written and declared Word of God. . . . the Word of God does not contain any account of the cosmos; any ontology of the created totality. The Word of God is concerned with God and man. (CD III/2, 6)

Returning to the content of his doctrine of the Trinity, Barth puts great emphasis on the unity of God. This is, of course, presupposed in the question to which the Trinity is the answer. "God is fully trinitarian but any such assertion is subordinated to the demands of singularity posited in the act of revelation" (Roberts 1980, 85). But Barth does not stress the unity of God merely because his concept of revelation demands it. Rather, it is because he is very conscious of the scriptural witness to the unity of God's activity and lordship.

The result of this stress on unity is a very forceful insistence on the unipersonality of God. For example, in his 1938 Gifford Lectures, he insists that the message of the doctrine is that,

from eternity and to eternity God is the Subject, the Person, who establishes Himself and is founded on Himself . . . He is thrice named, and thrice truly exists as the One God, the one Subject, the one Person, but the Person who begets Himself, proceeds from Himself and Himself is master of His own existence and essence. (Barth 1938, 31)

This must cause us to look more closely at the way in which Barth's trinitarianism influences his doctrine of creation for, as we have been seeking to show, it is precisely the monistic tendency of the Augustinian tradition which has allowed an ambivalence to creep into Christian

attitudes to the nonhuman creation. But what does Barth mean by unipersonality? Is this stress on the unity of God prima facie evidence of the Augustinian heritage of monism?

In discussing the divine hypostases, Barth rejects the use of the word Person. He notes that the modern concept "is distinguished from the patristic and mediaeval persona by the addition of the attribute of self-consciousness" (CDI/1, 357). This he considers sufficient to render a doctrine of the Trinity so interpreted, "the worst and most extreme expression of tritheism" (CD I/1, 351).

What are the three, if not persons in the modern sense? Barth accepts the risk of being accused of modalism and insists that they are modes of the divine being: three ways in which God is God. His defence against this accusation is that the essence of modalism is the reduction of the hypostases to the level of economic manifestations of the one God. This destroys the Christian concept of revelation by denying that God reveals Himself.

When Barth speaks of the hypostases as ways of being, he intends to convey that, in Himself, God is only as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but that He ever is as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The one divine subject exists three times over as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not the same as the suggestion that the one divine subject consists of three subpersonal hypostases. In other words, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each fully personal but it is the same person in each case.

Barth has inverted the Augustinian approach to the

Trinity. The latter can be summarised in the formula that the three hypostases subsist in the one divine essence (leaving room for personality to be attributed to the essence rather than the Persons). For Barth, the reverse is the case: the one divine essence subsists in three ways of being.

One positive implication of this is that God is essentially relational. The divine unity is constituted by the relations between the hypostases. In keeping with this relational basis for trinitarianism a tendency towards a more pluralistic understanding of the Trinity has often been discerned in Barth's later work. For example, Kaiser points to the influence of Buber's work which begins to appear in CD III (Kaiser 1982, 114) while Rowan Williams comments that his acceptance of a substitutionary theory of the atonement in CD IV entails a more pluralistic understanding of the Trinity²⁵ (Williams 1979, 176).

Finally the Augustinian heritage appears to be alive and well in his spirited defence of the filioque clause. To be fair to Barth, his defence is based on his desire to be true to the witness of Scripture and his understanding of revelation. He believes that the Orthodox acceptance of an economic filioque without a corresponding acceptance of the essential filioque is tantamount to a denial that God reveals Himself.

(b) Perichoresis and the opera ad extra principle

Barth maintains his strong doctrine of divine unity by means of the concept of perichoresis. By this he means us to understand that there is such a high degree of mutual interpenetration of the hypostases that any one is always present in the other two. In other words, the three ways of being do not have any autonomous existence or operation. Any attempt to distinguish them is analytic in the sense that while it aids our understanding it should not be taken to represent the living reality.

This concept is of interest to us primarily because it leads immediately to a fairly strict interpretation of the patristic principle, opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt. For Barth, this affirmation of the indivisibility of divine activity ad extra entails not only the indivisibility of divine agency but also the indivisibility of the action. In other words, all divine activity is one work: "all God's work, as we are to grasp it on the basis of His revelation, is one act which occurs simultaneously and in concert in all His three modes of being" (CD I/1, 375). This is a corollary of his belief that divine activity is the essence of God in relation to creation (CD I/1, 371).

Barth's use of the principle has two important implications. First, in keeping with his understanding of the basis of Christian knowledge, every opus ad extra is a work of the triune God. The activity of origination, sustenance, reconciliation and consummation is an activity in which all three hypostases participate throughout.

Second, although the three hypostases are intimately involved in all divine activity none of this activity may be used as a basis for distinguishing the hypostases. He insists on this latter point to forestall any speculation which might undermine the unity of God (or even suggest that the divine essence is somehow comprehensible).

Once again we appear to be faced with the spectre of modalism. And, once again, Barth explicitly defends his position against such an accusation. He limits his stress on the unity of the opera ad extra by insisting that it may not be taken to the point of extinguishing the genuine independence of the hypostases. He vigorously denies the modalistic view that, "no statement relating to this opus ad extra can be seriously made about a specific mode of being, and all statements relating to this opus ad extra can be made indiscriminately about any individual mode of being" (CD I/1, 396).

Thus for Barth, "Not the Father alone, then, is God the Creator, but also the Son and the Spirit with Him. And the Father is not only God the Creator, but with the Son and the Spirit He is also God the Reconciler and God the Redeemer" (CD I/1, 394f.).

(c) Appropriation and creation

Barth balances his strong interpretation of the unity of opera ad extra with an equally strong understanding of the doctrine of appropriation. In a sense this is Barth's sole concession to the tradition of seeking vestigia trinitatis

in created reality. He asserts that revelation itself (and only revelation) contains legitimate vestigia. And these are to be found in Scripture not because of any continuity of being between God and created reality but solely because, by the grace of God, the Christian revelation somehow corresponds to the divine essence.

In Barth's view, Scripture bears witness to particular divine activities ad extra in such a way that they seem particularly appropriate to particular modes of being. But the appearance of such correspondences within Holy Scripture places us under an obligation to make responsible use of them. They are not an optional extra that the Christian theologian is free to ignore in favour of some other dogmatic structure.

He explains what he means by responsible use of appropriation as follows. Following Aquinas, he insists that an appropriation must be intelligible. "There has to be a manifest kinship, similarity and analogy between the three things signifying and the three things signified" (CD I/1, 374). It must also be inclusive, i.e., it must not destroy the unity of God by attributing some quality or act exclusively to a particular hypostasis so that it becomes constitutive of the hypostasis. Finally, he adds to these Thomistic rules a third which governs the others: appropriations "are authentic when they are taken literally or materially or both from Holy Scripture, when they are a rendering or interpretation of the appropriations found there" (CD I/1, 374).

As far as the doctrine of creation is concerned, Barth notes that the Christian tradition recognises in Scripture a correspondence between the origination of created reality in and with time and the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. Thus he follows the first article of the creed in appropriating creation to the Father. This means that a trinitarian interpretation of creation will recognise that it is appropriate to the Father. However, it may not be treated as exclusively the activity of the Father without losing its Christian character. Creation is not proper to the Father: a treatment of creation as the work of the father will not be exhaustive.

(d) A trinitarian doctrine of creation?

The above suggests that Barth has recognised the importance of treating creation as a trinitarian activity. At the beginning of his own doctrine of creation he stresses that when he speaks of the Father as Creator he is using this as shorthand for "the Father of Jesus Christ, who as such in eternal generation posits Himself in the Son by the Holy Spirit" (CD III/1, 11). And, elsewhere he explicitly makes a very close connection between a properly trinitarian account of creation and its character as a good work of God (CD III/1, 332).

Barth insists that both the Son and the Holy Spirit have their own distinctive roles in creation. And yet we have seen that he does not fully escape the ambivalence which is so characteristic of the tradition. In his case it

is expressed by his reduction of creation to anthropology. The justification for this reduction is precisely the absence of a convincing systematic exposition of the material creation in the Christian traditions he draws upon (CD III/2, 4-6). In spite of his insistence on a trinitarian account he still seems able to accept a basically negative approach to the nonhuman creation.

This raises the question of how trinitarian his account really is. In seeking to answer this question we shall focus our attention upon CD III/3 in which Barth expounds his doctrine of providence. The reason for this attention is twofold: on the one hand, this aspect of his doctrine of creation has been neglected relative to the first two part-volumes²⁶, and, on the other, it is precisely here that I would wish to locate a theological account of God's dealings with the nonhuman.

(i) The form of Barth's doctrine of providence: Standing as he does in the Calvinist tradition, Barth takes a more activist view of God's involvement in his creation than does Tillich. He understands providence as a voluntary and caring activity of maintenance and direction. This is reflected in his definition: "By 'providence' is meant the superior dealings of the Creator with His creation, the wisdom, omnipotence and goodness with which He maintains and governs in time this distinct reality according to the counsel of His own will" (CD III/3, 3).

In line with Reformed theology, he has opted to make his doctrine of providence part of the doctrine of creation.

He does so because, in his view, providence belongs to the doctrine of the execution of God's will and therefore presupposes creation. This is the basis for his criticism of the mediaeval Scholastic tendency to locate providence alongside predestination as part of the doctrine of God. In so doing they implied that the being of God somehow depends on the existence of the created order. This led ultimately to the pantheism of some of the later mediaeval mystics²⁷.

However, he is equally unhappy with the Protestant tendency to identify providence with creation. He rejects the concept of creatio continua adopted by Tillich²⁸, seeing in Gn. 2:1-3 a clear Biblical distinction between creation and providence. Creation is a single prehistorical act in which God posits a reality distinct from himself. Providence, however, is a continuing relationship, a history based on the presupposition of the act of creation.

To deny this distinction is to risk two possible dangers. Providence may overwhelm creation, in which case the concept of creatio ex nihilo may be lost (as in Tillich and Schleiermacher). Alternatively, creation may dominate with providence reduced to a series of re-creations, a set of still pictures arranged sequentially to give the illusion of change. Thus, by destroying the limits laid down by Gen. 2:2 some theologians²⁹ have threatened the autonomy and activity of the creature with a reduction to mere appearance.

However his emphasis on the distinction between creation and providence is, perhaps, made at the expense of

obscuring their relationship. He refers to providence as a continuatio creationis, a continuation of creation rather than the continued creation to which he takes exception. This could easily suggest that creation and providence are distinct works with a common origin. As Robert Jenson has pointed out their relationship has to be expounded with some care if we are to avoid giving the impression that the primal act of creation has no relevance to religion (Jenson 1982a). Unfortunately Barth offers no such exposition.

Before moving on to the content of his doctrine we should note one more characteristically Barthian departure from the western theological consensus. He rejects out of hand any speculative basis for providence. There is no evidence for providence which is accessible to natural reason. This is, of course, a corollary of his rejection of natural theology. For Barth, the only basis for the Christian doctrine of providence, as for every Christian doctrine, is Christian faith. Thus, "We can believe in providence only on the basis of a Nevertheless which does not spring from our own pious hearts but is forced upon us from without" (CD III/3, 17).

God's providential relation to the world can be known only because it is revealed as an element of salvation history, and, specifically as an element of God's self-revelation in Christ. It follows that providence is Christocentric and Barth can say that, "it is the execution of the election of grace resolved and fulfilled by God from all eternity. It is thus the history of the covenant between

God and man . . . There is no other meaning or purpose in history" (CD III/3, 36).

Although creation as a whole is appropriated to the Father by Barth, this is purely formal. The content of the doctrine of providence is focussed exclusively on the Son. For Barth, a Christian conception of providence can only be derived from the reconciliation and redemption accomplished by the incarnate Christ.

This has a significant effect on his understanding of the relationship between salvation history and all other world-occurrence (i.e., the totality of creaturely events including those which make up human history). He repeatedly appears to subordinate the latter to the former. Thus the theologian can understand world events only in the light of Biblical events, which are, "the inner basis of all creaturely occurrence" (CD III/3, 183). Conversely, the theologian may not dwell on world events in themselves but only as they reflect Biblical events. He justifies this as follows,

The general events do not happen for their own sake. They do not form a self-contained and self-motivated whole as contrasted with the particular events. The general events have their meaning in the particular . . . They are not, therefore, a final end, an end in themselves; they serve rather as the copy and reflection of the particular events. (CD III/3, 184)

Covenant history is the key for understanding all other events. The theologian, "can and will understand all other occurrence only in its relation to this special occurrence" (CD III/3, 37). Covenant history, and hence Christ, is the noetic basis for general history and our knowledge of

creation. This arises naturally enough from his understanding of revelation. Christian knowledge of creation can come only from the revelation of God in Christ. It follows that Christ is the noetic basis of creation: "It is here that God Himself has revealed the relationship between Creator and creature--its basis, norm and meaning" (CD III/1, 25).

So seriously does he take this that he uses the existence of Christ as an argument for the actuality of creation (since the existence of Christ indicates that there exists a sphere in which divine activity and relationship can occur ad extra). Furthermore, if Christ is the noetic basis of creation, He is the ontic basis also, the constitutive centre of creation: "Jesus Christ is the Word by which the knowledge of creation is mediated to us because He is the Word by which God has fulfilled creation and continually maintains and rules it" (CD III/1, 28).

This Christocentricity gives rise to a good deal of criticism. Typical is Santmire's argument that, under the guise of a doctrine of creation, he has merely reaffirmed the twentieth century neglect of creation, that instead of a theology of nature he gives us only a theology of the human, and that at best the natural order is regarded as a backdrop for the human drama of salvation (Santmire 1982). Barth's apparently unqualified approval of Calvin's metaphorical reference to the cosmos as theatrum gloriae dei (with its strongly anthropocentric overtones) seems to give substance to these charges.

However, his use of world-occurrence and covenant history suggests that the charges may be misdirected. This twofold division replaces a threefold division in traditional treatments of providence. Covenant history corresponds to the old providentia specialissima: God's providential care for the elect, while world-occurrence corresponds to both providentia specialis and providentia generalis: God's providential care for man and creation in general, respectively. In other words, humanity and nature are together subordinated to the history of Jesus Christ. Barth himself develops the idea that the humanity of Christ is the key to a theology of the human. However, he does not attempt the parallel task of relating the physical world to the physicality of Christ. The accusations, and his failure to develop the concept of the dependence of the nonhuman clearly warrant further investigation.

Finally the internal structure of his doctrine should be noted. He adopts, apparently without explanation, the traditional threefold structure of the Reformed doctrine, i.e., preservation, concurrence, and government. However the apparent repetitiousness of his treatment of these topics suggests that he does not see them as separate works but rather as three aspects of the one divine work of providence³⁰.

(ii) Preservation: Barth links preservation with redemption by the way in which he expresses the divine work of maintaining creation as a distinct reality. God is doing what the creature cannot do for itself, namely, preserving

it against overthrow, against dissolution into the chaos of das Nichtige.

However, he does not simply identify preservation with redemptive grace. As Brunner has pointed out, this would be to entail universalism (Brunner 1952, 154f.): providence, unlike redemptive grace, operates indirectly. On the other hand, he objects to Brunner's insistence on a preserving grace independent of redemption on the grounds that it would lead to a form of natural theology (Barth 1946, 84). For Barth, providence is still an activity of God mediated by creatures, but, as such, it is not knowable apart from the self-revelation of God in his redeeming activity.

As one would expect, he criticises the other extreme interpretation of providence, i.e., its identification with the nexus of natural laws (a position taken by, e.g., Lipsius and Schleiermacher). This could lead us to overlook the contingency of creation. Furthermore, in his view, it would constitute a denial that providence is a divine activity since it implies that creatures are sustained by other creatures: that the causal nexus is self-grounded.

Barth is reticent about the mode of divine preservation. All he is prepared to say is that it is a work of God's free goodness, a work of grace, and that, as such, it confirms that election is eternal. The Biblical revelation of the graciousness of divine preservation points to the trustworthiness of God and, for Barth, this finds ontological expression in terms of eternity. He uses this to confirm his earlier rejection of the understanding of

providence as a continuous re-creation.

One point that warrants careful consideration is his insistence on the spatio-temporal limitation of all creaturely existence and, indeed, of creation as a whole. This must be set alongside his apparently contradictory insistence on the eternal preservation of creation by God. Thus he can say, "To no creature does it belong to be endless, omnipotent or enduring" (CD III/3, 61), and immediately balance it with, "He preserves it eternally. He does not allow His creation to perish" (CD III/3, 61). And, then, on the next page, "A preservation which consisted in extending the being of creation to infinity would not be the work of God" (CD III/3, 62).

In such statements and parallel passages relating to the goal of the divine government we are given a few fragmentary glimpses of the eschatology which Barth did not live to write. We are also introduced to one of the most complex issues in the study of Barth's theology, namely, his concept of eternity. He clearly expects a real and final end to creaturely existence. It cannot continue after death (which is a part of God's good creation and not the consequence of some primal Fall). Similarly he envisages an end for creation as a whole:

it will not need to progress any further, it will have fulfilled its purpose. Everything that happened in the course of that history will then take place together as a recapitulation of all individual events. It will be made definitive as the temporal end of the creature beyond which it cannot exist any more . . . It will not need any continuation of temporal existence. And since the creature itself will not be there, time . . . will not be there. (CD III/3, 87f.)

Creaturely existence is spatio-temporal existence. Beyond the limits placed on the creature there is only divine existence and eternity. Preservation means that God creates a time for the cosmos within his eternity: within the divine time. But it means more than this for, when the ultimate limit of creaturely existence is reached, "in the totality of its temporal duration it will still be open and present to Him, and therefore preserved: eternally preserved" (CD III/3, 89).

Eternal preservation means that God's fidelity towards his creation is such that its end is not an annihilation or a merely objective immortality³¹ but a recapitulation or consummation. Barth expands on this as follows,

Everything will be present to Him exactly as it was or is or will be, in all its reality, in the whole temporal course of its activity, in its strength or weakness, in its majesty or meanness. He will not allow anything to perish, but will hold it in the hollow of his hand as He has always done, and does, and will do. He will not be alone in eternity, but with the creature. He will allow it to partake of His own eternal life. And in this way the creature will continue to be, even in its temporal duration. (CD III/3, 90)

We noted above that, for Barth, providence and redemption are inseparable but distinct. However, the universalism implicit in this and similar passages makes one wonder whether he has succeeded in maintaining the distinction.

Another question is raised by his use of the term creature. In this context it could very easily be taken to mean a cosmic totality of which individuals are mere component parts. This would recall Dorner's post-Hegelian

concept of the cosmos as a whole as the image of God (Dorner 1881, 27). As we shall see later, Barth clarifies his language to avoid such a possibility (which he regarded as offering a theological justification for totalitarianism).

(iii) Concurrence: This is probably the most controversial area of the Reformed doctrine of providence but Barth unhesitatingly reaffirms the traditional view, asserting that God is Lord, "in relation to the free and autonomous activity of the creature" (CD III/3, 90). Concurrence is distinguished from preservation by a difference of emphasis. Preservation focusses on the divine work of maintaining the creature while concurrence focusses on the proper autonomy of the creature.

The above statement of the meaning of concurrence has three important implications for Barth. It means that God does not abandon the creature to its autonomy (as in theologies which tend towards deism) but that, on the contrary, all creaturely activity occurs in God's presence. However, the divine presence does not undermine the autonomy of the creature. Instead God affirms and respects the relative autonomy of the creature's actuality and activity. Finally, he insists that, "nothing may or can take place as the action of the creature which is not in a very real sense His own action" (CD III/3, 93). In other words, since God's activity determines creaturely activity, every creaturely action is the product of a double agency. By affirming double agency, he is following the lead of Aquinas and Quenstedt (but he is also flying in the face of strong

contemporary philosophical opposition to the concept).

He puts up a vigorous defence of concurrence without, however, referring directly to contemporary critics of the notion. His main reason for maintaining the idea is that he sees it as having an important role in defending theology against various errors in our understanding of God's relation to the world. By affirming that the relative autonomy of the creature is guaranteed by the sovereign act of concurrence, he hopes to avoid both a denial of divine sovereignty which would allow the creature to limit the activity of God (as, e.g., in Process theology), and the tendency to Stoic determinism and resignation which is an ever present temptation for Reformed theology³².

How then would Barth reply to criticisms of concurrence? Emil Brunner attacks the notion on two main grounds (Brunner 1952, 153f.). First, it relates the causal nexus of the natural order and the divine work of preservation by applying the idea of causality to God. But Brunner regards God's actions as personal and therefore not describable in terms of causality. Thus the use of concurrence entails either equivocation or the depersonalisation of God. Second, it severs the autonomy of the created order from the divine work of preservation by introducing it as a distinct activity of God.

Barth simply denies the second criticism. The three aspects of providence cannot be separated in this way. Because they are interdependent, concurrence, far from severing creaturely autonomy and preservation, actually

guarantees that God preserves and governs autonomous creatures. For Barth, concurrence prevents providence from collapsing into omnicausality. Thus a denial of concurrence is tantamount to a denial of the Christian doctrine of providence.

His defence against the first charge takes the form of a long excursus on the theological use of the concept causa. He denies that Aristotelian terminology is in itself a source of error. The failure of Protestant orthodoxy was due instead to its inadequate biblical exposition which failed to relate providence to grace³³. As a result, the orthodox doctrine of concurrence, while formally correct, lacked any distinctively Christian content. Therefore Barth responds to the critics by laying down guidelines for the correct use of causa in the context of a Christian theology.

His main points are as follows. First, the concept, as used in theology, must not be confused with the efficient causality of natural science. This was what led Ritschl, he suggests, to reject concurrence. Second, it is not to be used as a common factor to bridge the gap between God and man. It must not become the basis for an analogia entis. The correct analogical use of causa is in the formation of an analogia operationis between utterly dissimilar beings. Finally, causa must be personalised by relating it to the personal activity of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Barth develops his second point by examining the qualitative difference between the potency of divine causality and that of creaturely causality. This implies an

irreversible order of precedence of the divine over the created. "God alone is genuinely and ultimately and absolutely superior in relation to all the reality which is distinct from Himself" (CD III/3, 108). His emphasis on the unique and incomprehensible majesty of God makes it impossible to present the creator-creature relationship in mechanical terms or as a divinisation of nature or history (with its consequent secularisation of providence).

He concludes his treatment of concurrence by examining it with reference to past, present, and future. Concurrence, he believes, encompasses all three moments of the divine activity. Praecurrit: there is always an activity of grace preceding the creaturely event in which God creates the conditions, preconditions, pre-preconditions, etc. of that event. Concurrit: God undergirds the contemporary context of all creaturely action. Succurrit: the outcome of all creaturely action is in the hands of God. Once again this points to the interdependence of the three aspects of providence. In preserving the world, God gives every creaturely event or action its past and present context, while in governing the world he takes charge of the outcome of each event.

(iv) Government: Fundamental to this element of Barth's doctrine of providence is the affirmation that God's preservation of, and cooperation with, his creation is not arbitrary. On the contrary it is directed towards a goal:

He rules as a Father. His ruling is the ruling of His definite and conscious will. Behind it there is meaning and purpose, plan and intention. God has an aim for the creature when He creates and accompanies it. (CD III/3, 155)

This is the dogmatic development of the Old Testament insight that Yahweh is king. His is a dynamic and salvific kingship. Thus his preservation of and cooperation with the natural order are not to be regarded as mere maintenance of the status quo as a backdrop to salvation history. God, in preserving and accompanying (a favourite Barthian synonym for concurrence) creation, also directs it towards a telos, a consummation in accordance with his will. We have already had cause to examine this goal in connection with God's eternal preservation of the cosmos. However Barth now makes several points which qualify and clarify his earlier remarks.

He begins by considering the uniqueness of the divine sovereignty and the indissoluble subjectivity of God. This causes him to make the striking assertion that, "God Himself is irreplaceably and unexchangeably the Subject of this rule" (CD III/3, 157). This has two major implications.

The first is that there can be no legitimate goal which is independent of God's will. Any attempt to achieve autonomy would constitute a rebellion against God's will. But, in fact, such attempts are doomed to failure (CD III/3, 157).

The second implication is summarised by Barth as follows,

the fact that God alone rules includes the further fact that He Himself is the only goal which He has appointed for the creature and towards which He directs it. Proceeding from God and accompanied by God, the creature must also return to God. It must; for this is its greatness and dignity and hope. The movement towards God is the meaning of its history. (CD III/3, 158)

A more literal translation of the central sentence in this passage would be, "Coming hither from Him and accompanied by Him, he [the creature] must go again to meet Him." This suggests a final encounter with God: a meeting in which, by the grace of God, the creature retains its own identity, its own subjectivity. Taken in conjunction with his earlier remarks, it rules out the interpretation of eternal preservation in terms of a purely objective immortality.

Barth uses his discussion of the uniqueness of the divine rule to clear up a number of important misconceptions. Once again he reminds us that one of the major functions of an adequate doctrine of providence is to act as a bulwark against the errors of Stoic pantheism and Epicurean deism: the Scylla and Charybdis of God's relation to the world. This time he does so by affirming that divine government, properly understood, encompasses both necessity and contingency. Thus it can be reduced neither to the uniformity of natural law (as in Stoicism and its offshoots) nor to a series of discrete divine interventions in an otherwise autonomous cosmos (a semi-deistic position). He adds the comment that, "God honours law as well as freedom. He loves the law-abiding bourgeois as well as the nomad" (CD III/3, 161).

A corollary of this is that God's rule must be hidden by virtue of its very transcendence. As creatures, we are embedded in the antithesis of law and freedom. We are unable to see reality in its wholeness and are similarly unable to comprehend God's rule in its transcendence. For Barth, of course, this is an ideal cue for yet another warning about the dangers of natural theology: "We cannot identify with the divine dynamic, or substitute for it, that which we ourselves think to be dynamic as opposed to static" (CD III/3, 161).

He then discusses the divine rule itself in the light of these clarifications. God rules the cosmos by ordering it. This immediately brings to mind the Calvinistic tendency to see the divine ordering as a predetermination of the cosmos. But Barth rejects the notion that God's ordering is in any way like the clockwork unfolding of an eternal plan. Of course, there is an eternal plan but it takes the form of God's eternal election of Jesus Christ. And God's ordering of the cosmos according to that plan must be seen as a dynamic operation: a continuous divine activity within the time of the creature. In this way he is able to maintain that God is not the prisoner of his own design in contrast to the Calvinistic emphasis on the eternity of God's ordering (which led eventually to the determinism of Schleiermacher).

Perhaps because of the challenge of Calvinism, he is unusually forthcoming about how he conceives of this continuous divine ordering. It is to be understood as a

series of permissive acts in which God places limits on the activity of the creature. By thus limiting their activity God subordinates all creatures to the divine goal of creation while at the same time creating the space, as it were, for the relative autonomy of the creature:

God controls all things because in and with and by and for all things He wills and actually accomplishes one thing--His own glory as Creator, and in it the justification, deliverance, salvation, and ultimately the glorification of the creature as it realises its particular existence as a means of glorifying the Creator. He gives it this office by subordinating its particular ends to this common end, by allowing it even in the particularity of its activity and effects to have a place in the fulfilment of His own plan. (CD III/3, 168f.)

As a corollary, Barth argues that it is precisely this subordination to a common end which forms the basis for all relationships between creatures. He refers to this as, "a coordination of the creatures one with another" (CD III/3, 169). The divine subordination of the creatures to Himself and coordination with each other serves the important purpose of guaranteeing the meaning, rights and value of every individual creature; even the most insignificant. "God harmonizes and coordinates the creatures one with another, but this does not mean that the individual creature has no meaning nor right to exist except as a non-autonomous atom, a mere cog in a machine" (CD III/3, 169).

His discussion of subordination and coordination strengthens his defence against the accusation that he has subordinated general world-occurrence to salvation history (except insofar as salvation history means the personal history of the incarnate Christ). For Barth, each creature

stands in a direct relationship with God by virtue of which it has worth and a place in the history of creation as a whole. He sees this individual subordination of every creature directly to God as an essential defence against all hierarchical and totalitarian world views. Without it there is the constant risk of the individual being degraded by subordination to natural occurrence as a whole. And wherever this doctrine of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts takes hold there exists the further risk of the parts being sacrificed for the sake of the few who represent or embody the whole. Against this, Christian theology affirms that all are abased and that therefore all are also exalted by their relationship with God.

(v) Providence and evil: Barth's treatment of providence is such that it makes some form of theodicy an urgent necessity. Preservation is not mere maintenance but the protection of the creature against the threat of chaos posed by das Nichtige. Concurrence leads to the affirmation of double agency thus implicating God in the evil actions of his creatures and undermining the freewill explanation of evil. And his exposition of God's sovereign government stresses the impossibility of creaturely resistance to the divine will.

His discussion of the problem of evil involves a significant departure from tradition which is relevant to any theological understanding of the natural order, namely, the rejection of the concept of natural evil. For Barth, natural evil is a contradiction in terms. If it is natural,

it is part of God's good creation and therefore to call it evil is not only inaccurate but also blasphemous. Instead he talks of the shadow-side of creation. Even death is not, in itself, evil. God's good creation contains, "Not only a Yes but also a No; . . . not only growth but also decay; . . . not only beauty but also ashes; not only beginning but also end" (CD III/3, 296f.).

And yet, "It is irrefutable that creation and creature are good even in the fact that all that exists in this contrast and antithesis" (CD III/3, 297).

The darkness and misfortunes of the natural world are not evil, for in them there remains the possibility for praise of God. We can see this in the poetry of William Blake or Gerald Manley Hopkins but, for Barth, it was most evident in the music of Mozart (CD III/3, 297-99).

The real root of evil and sin is das Nichtige (usually translated 'nothingness'). Barth's explanation of this concept is, to put it mildly, tortuous. It is something unnatural. It is the actual source of the impossible resistance to God's will which characterises this fallen cosmos. It is more than a mere privatio boni or privatio entis. It is an active malevolence. It is a privation of grace. It is part of creation but was not created by God. It is an impossible possibility arising out of the eternal election of Christ. One is not surprised when John Hick dismisses it as mythological or Brunner declares that it is self-contradictory.

How do we know that the negativities of creation are

not part of this impossible possibility? Barth discerned this from the way in which Mozart wove together themes of darkness and light in his music. More significantly we find it in God's self-revelation. Mere physical suffering and death are not the enemies against which the Gospel warns. On the contrary, they are affirmed, together with the rest of the natural order, in the Incarnation.

But why does Barth find the notion of natural evil blasphemous? By mistaking the shadow-side of creation for the true enemy we run the risk of concealing the true enemy. As a consequence, das Nichtige is not taken sufficiently seriously. Real sin is reduced to venial error. Real evil is seen as temporary. And the devil is granted a share in the Kingdom by way of a general apokatastasis. This, rather than the implied contradiction of the goodness of God's creation revealed in Scripture, is the blasphemy of natural evil.

(vi) God's providential care for the nonhuman?: Does Barth's doctrine of providence offer an adequate basis for the development of a theology of nature? As we have seen, he makes a number of points which, if generalised to include all creatures, do seem to promise such a basis. However, there has been considerable criticism of his doctrine of creation (particularly from those who want to establish a theology of nature) which raise questions about the validity of such a generalisation.

The most comprehensive of these critiques, at least in English, is Linzey 1986. In what follows, I propose to ask

whether the above survey of CD III/3 bears out his investigations (which focussed on CD III/1 and III/2).

Linzey gathers his criticisms of Barth together into four major categories of deficiency (Linzey 1986, 150-63): the Christological, the Biblical, the ontological, and the trinitarian. His Christological deficiency lies in the fact that he neglects an essential dimension of Christ's relationship with creation. He is so concerned with Christ's relationship with mankind that he completely fails to develop the implications of the incarnation for Christ's relationship with the nonhuman. The Biblical deficiency is due to a theological concentration on the divine-human dimension of the covenant which blinds him to the possibility of a scriptural witness to nonhuman involvement in the covenant³⁴. According to Linzey, his ontological deficiency lies in his failure to define the relationship of the nonhuman creation to the human. As a result of this failure he tends towards an instrumental view of this relationship. Linzey concludes that,

the danger in Barth's exposition is that man as created is seen as existing within his own morally exclusive world. The reality of Creator and created gives way to a quasi-Platonic notion of the real (human) creation and the unreal (nonhuman) creation. What appears solely real and purposeful is human creation as affirmed in Christ. Man is thus set adrift from creation for the relationship of purpose which unites the Word with the creation as a whole, and through which the world is redeemed, is unavoidably severed. (Linzey 1986, 160)

Finally Linzey points out that, notwithstanding Barth's insistence on a fully trinitarian treatment of creation, for all practical purposes he operates within a binitarian

framework.

Our examination of CD III/3 suggests that, here too, Barth has lost sight of the trinitarian perspective which, in his view, ought to characterise all Christian doctrine. Indeed the extent of his Christological concentration is such that one wonders whether he even retains a binitarian outlook. Formally, of course, he regards providence as a work of the Father because of its location within the doctrine of creation. However, the Father is mentioned only five times in the entire work. The Holy Spirit does rather better with twelve references, but only four occur within the sections containing the positive exposition of the doctrine (and, almost unbelievably, only one of those references relates to the divine government).

Of course one can always reply to such a criticism by invoking the principle opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt, and Barth (following Calvin) does remind us that unqualified references to God should be treated as referring to the entire Trinity. But merely reminding us of this when he displays such a degree of Christological concentration within a doctrine formally appropriated to the Father is not enough. Indeed it suggests that, here at least, he has not taken the doctrine of appropriation sufficiently seriously. This in turn suggests that we have here a trace of the Augustinian legacy of monism.

Barth's monistic interpretation combines with the fact that he sees Jesus Christ as the key to God's self-revelation and results in a Christological domination of the

doctrine. This Christocentricity is illustrated by the fact that there are no less than thirty seven separate references to Christ in Church Dogmatics III/3 (of which five are passages of several pages in length). We also see it in Barth's insistence that, to be distinctively Christian, faith in providence must be faith in the Christian God and that this means faith in Christ (rather than faith in the Trinity). This orientation has several unfortunate implications.

We noted earlier that, for Barth, Christ is the noetic and hence the ontic basis of creation; the constitutive centre of creation. It is in this sense that he calls Christ the Mediator of creation (CD I/1, 441). This concentration is reflected in the way in which the laws of nature are both relativised and guaranteed by his doctrine of providence. As the outworking of the divine will they may not be regarded as autonomous. On the other hand, just because they are the outworking of the divine will, they are guaranteed a real existence.

Since, for Barth, Christ is central to our concept of deity, it follows that the natural order is constituted solely by its relation to Christ. Thus it is perfectly natural for him to regard the incarnate Christ as the paradigm of the creature. A theological understanding of man and nature is possible only by means of an understanding of Christ. It is at this point that Linzey's first criticism begins to bite. Barth is so concerned with the implications of his theology for human life that he fails to

develop a theological understanding of nature. At the same time an element of anthropocentricity has crept in. He allows the humanity of Christ to blind him to the physicality of Christ. He proclaims, "Here is the Son of Man. Here is humanity at the heart of the cosmos" (CD III/1, 28). But the heart is too easily substituted for the totality so that, "in practice the doctrine of creation means anthropology" (CD III/1, 3). Ironically on the very next page he warns that "If we forget that he [man] must remain loyal to the earth, we shall never truly understand him." Barth clearly does not remember his own warning: his recurring tendency to equate Jesus Christ and/or humankind with the creature is well documented.

That this is not a conscious policy of anthropocentrism is clear from the absence of its corollary, a utilitarian view of nature. Linzey points out that in spite of his tendency to appear utilitarian by default, Barth does reject this option in his treatment of the 18th and 19th century utilitarian teleologists³⁵. In CD III/3 this rejection is reflected in his assertions about the subordination of all creatures to God and their consequent coordination with one another. Admittedly his primary concern here, as elsewhere, is with the divine-human axis: his comments reflect his own rejection of totalitarianism. But his doctrine of providence does not exclude the nonhuman in the same way as the earlier part-volumes of CD III. Indeed at times his language about God's care for the nonhuman becomes almost lyrical. For example with respect to preservation he can

say,

Therefore nothing will escape Him: no aspect of the great game of creation; no moment of human life; no thinking thought; no word spoken; no secret or insignificant enterprise or deed or omission with all its interaction and effects; no suffering or joy; no sincerity or lie; no secret event in heaven or too well-known event on earth; no ray of sunlight; no note which has ever sounded; no colour which has ever been revealed, possibly in the darkness of oceanic depths where the eye of man has never perceived it; no wing-beat of the day-fly in far-flung epochs of geological time. (CD III/3, 90)

Another implication of his stress on the centrality of Christ in creation is that he runs the risk of allowing creation to be swallowed up by redemption. Creation has been made entirely dependent on the eternal actuality of Jesus Christ and only his insistence on the historical physical character of the incarnation prevents his theology from becoming purely idealistic. His invariable failure to develop the implications of the physicality of Christ for the nonhuman is largely responsible for the sense of unreality which so many commentators feel pervades his doctrine of creation and providence.

Finally we ought to examine his treatment of the role of the Holy Spirit in creation. It is arguable that he has so emphasised the role of the Son that both Father and Spirit are marginalised. Certainly his treatment of the Holy Spirit in relation to creation is less than satisfactory. For Barth, the Spirit's role is primarily noetic (pertaining to the subjective dimension of creation).

He admits the biblical witness to the Holy Spirit as life giver and works from that to the statement that the

Holy Spirit is the goal of creation (CD I/1, 472). But when he comes to expand on this in his doctrine of creation what he, in fact, says is that,

it is in God the Holy Spirit that the creature as such pre-exists. That is to say, it is God the Holy Spirit who makes the existence of the creature as such possible, permitting it to exist, maintaining it in its existence, and forming the point of reference of its existence. (CD III/1, 56)

The orientation towards the past is quite striking. In keeping with this, Barth fails to appropriate the three dimensions of eternity (pre-temporality, supra-temporality, and post-temporality) to the hypostases in CD II/1. And he fails to do so in spite of the fact that this clearly meets his own conditions for a responsible appropriation and, furthermore, that he recognises that overemphases on one or other of these aspects have been accompanied in the history of Protestant theology by overemphasis on the corresponding Person³⁶ (CD II/1, 630ff.).

In conclusion, Barth's theology promises much that is of positive value to the theologian of nature. Unfortunately his own theological concerns not only prevented him from developing that promise but have done much to obscure the ecological promise that is there. To move forward from this position it will be necessary to retrace his steps with a different set of concerns and with a view to making up the deficiencies which have been discerned in his system.

NOTES

1. His debt to Augustine (and Origen) was so great that Braaten has commented "it was often difficult to distinguish Tillich's own doctrine from theirs" (Braaten 1967, xxi)
2. Of these influences the greatest was undoubtedly Schelling whose nature philosophy was the subject of his dissertations for his Ph.D. and his Licentiate.
3. Essence and existence may be used either descriptively or prescriptively. Essentialism is Tillich's term for the mainly descriptive approach of Aristotle, Aquinas, and Kant. Existentialism denotes the more prescriptive approach of Plotinus, Augustine, and Schelling (Dourley 1975, 50-71). This distinction corresponds exactly with his very sharp distinction between cosmological and ontological philosophies of religion (Tillich 1964a).
4. In addition to its insistence on relevance, it is argued that the specific content of Tillich's theology lends itself to a more balanced critique of our technocentric society than either the technological optimism of Harvey Cox or the prophetic warnings of Jacques Ellul and the environmentalists (Bulman 1984).
5. This suggestion has been made not only by former pupils and disciples of Tillich (e.g., Gilkey 1985; Santmire 1985, 141; and, Shinn 1985) but also by Pannenberg 1973.
6. The Heideggerian starting point in the questioning subject and Tillich's method of correlation recall the introspective theological method of the Neoplatonists and Augustinians. The infinite and the finite meet and interpenetrate in the essential structure of reality (Dourley 1975, 53). Thus man encounters God by becoming at one with his own essence. This suggests that Tillich's methodology is in some ways the contemporary philosophical parallel of Augustine's spirituality. This connection is further underlined by the possibility that the method of correlation is as idealist as it is existentialist, presupposing, as it does, an underlying correspondence between the human situation and the divine Word; between thought and reality (Young 1976, 103).
7. For Tillich, as for Augustine and Bonaventure, love is primarily unitive: it is eros, the ontological power which enables the self-return of the self-separated.
8. This identification of the Father with power and the Son with form recalls the trinitarian theology of Peter Abailard condemned by St Bernard.
9. This is not to deny that this dialectical structure may be a formal condition for life. His error lies in the reduction of the Trinity to such a formal structure. Jenson comments that early Christian efforts to soften the paradox of trinitarianism invariably led to heretical conclusions (Jenson 1982b, 64). Tillich

- appears to use dialectics to soften the paradox in precisely this way (e.g., Tillich 1957, 90f.).
10. He does not dwell on the difficulties of using person as a symbol for that which transcends personhood. Such a use of symbols in theology recalls the via negativa of the Christian Platonists.
 11. He uses the term in a non-technical sense, e.g., in sermons and in his discussion of "Nature and Sacrament" (Tillich 1951). However, his insistence that time must take priority over space (Tillich 1964b) means that nature must be historicised. This, in turn, means that he is unable to treat nature and history as polar elements in the structure of being (Tillich 1953, 183).
 12. Compare Augustine and Bonaventure's view of the relationship of soul and body.
 13. These are ontological dimensions not biological ones. For example, his understanding of inner awareness as characteristic of the animal realm leads to a scientifically heterodox definition of animal. Nor is inner awareness a particularly clear way of defining a particular dimension. What constitutes inner awareness? Is it sense perception? And, if so, can it be identified with response to external stimuli? The answer must be 'no', else many plants and even mouse traps would have to be defined as animal. Is it some form of rudimentary self-awareness? Then many forms of animal life (including creatures as complex as insects) would have to be re-classified as members of the vegetable kingdom!
 14. One minor weakness in Tillich's use of the metaphor of dimensions is the suggestion that all dimensions are present, actually or potentially, in every situation (Tillich 1964c, 16). This raises the question of whether genuine novelty is possible.
 15. He has so elevated the concept of non-being that it appears to have become for him a polar element of deity itself. To speak of creation out of nothing is thus to speak of creation out of the abyssmal aspect of God.
 16. What is more, he reads this tendency back into Augustine (Tillich 1968, 117).
 17. Another possibility is that he is forced to regard God as intrinsically creative because of the correspondence between his dialectical conceptions of life and creativity. Life is creativity, the union of power and form. If God is Spirit, unbounded life, he must also be unbounded creativity. However, Tillich could not admit this possibility because it violates his theological method (if it were true, it would undermine his claim that philosophical considerations were merely determinative of the form of his theology).
 18. While one must make allowances for the fact that this was said in the context of a sermon, it clearly suggests that the insistence on an existential starting point for every doctrine leads to the danger that every doctrine becomes anthropocentric.
 19. This is reminiscent of Schelling or, at least, of

Tillich's interpretation of him: "When I am one with nature, I am one with God, who is nature's quickening force" (Tillich 1974, 55).

20. The one exception would be the new being, Jesus who is identified with the Christ.
21. For Tillich this means that it contradicts agreed opinion based on the whole of ordinary human experience. It does not imply irrationality or absurdity.
22. In both cases, the fulfilled state is denoted by spirit. God as spirit is God fulfilled in himself. Spirit is also the resolution of the ontological polarities, the perfection or re-essentialisation of finite being (Tillich 1953, 249f.). Thus the eschaton may be characterised as the spiritualisation of created being.
23. i.e., when the past is no longer experienced as loss and the future is not experienced as threat, but both are completely united with the now.
24. This would not be easy since it would throw into relief a possible element of incoherence in Tillich's thought, namely, the tension between the concepts of actuality, life and existence (Thatcher 1974).
25. The evidence for this pluralism should be treated with caution since the Barth of CD III could speak in a strongly monistic way at times, e.g., Barth 1949, 42. Furthermore it is likely that the young Barth was familiar with the work of Buber and Rosenzweig through his membership of the Patmos Circle (McLean 1981, 2). Why, then, should evidence of this familiarity only appear from CD III on?
26. This neglect may be due to his formal adherence to the Reformed tradition. Reviewers of CD III/3 have tended to dismiss his treatment of providence as conventional and focus on the less conventional aspects of that book, namely, his theodicy and angelology (e.g., Whitehouse 1951, 241).
27. His critique also applies to Tillich who, as we have seen, integrates his treatment of providence into the doctrine of God (and, who, at times appears to be coming to similar conclusions to those of the mediaeval mystics).
28. This concept recurs regularly in Reformed theology, being found in the work of Heppe, Schleiermacher, and Brunner, amongst others.
29. Barth cites Thomasius. However, this view of time is by no means restricted to theologians. Similar speculations can be found in the writings of both classical and contemporary physicists.
30. This contrasts with Brunner, who drops concurrence and treats preservation and government as distinct activities (Brunner 1952, 153f.).
31. In contrast to the divine memory of process theology.
32. This appears in Zwingli, and later in Schleiermacher and Alexander Schweizer but Barth discerns the roots of it even in Calvin.

33. Barth makes extensive use of the Heidelberg Catechism which, unusually for Reformed statements, refers to Christ's role in providence.
34. Linzey contends that the Old Testament bears witness to a peripheral but, nonetheless, real participation of nonhuman creatures in the covenant.
35. Barth's reference to their 'gastrocentricity' recalls Feuerbach's critique of the Christian doctrine of providence.
36. The Reformers overstressed pre-temporality together with the sovereignty of the Father; pietism and 19th century Protestant Liberalism overstressed supra-temporality together with the immanence of Jesus Christ; and the recent rediscovery of eschatology has led to an overemphasis on post-temporality and the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 5
THE PLACE OF THE NONHUMAN
IN THE BIBLICAL TRADITIONS

Previous chapters have highlighted the ambivalence of several major western theologians towards the nonhuman creation. We have also noted the inadequacy of dogmatic treatments of the subject and the recurrent tendency for this ambivalence to give way to antipathy.

This antipathy is often taken by critics to be the Christian view of nature. But can its roots be traced, as environmentalists argue, to the foundational traditions and documents of the Christian faith? Is the Judaeo-Christian tradition incorrigibly opposed to contemporary environmental anxieties? To answer these questions, we must examine what the biblical authors have to say about the relationships between God, humankind, and the nonhuman creation.

However, as with any other book, it is not possible to read the Bible without bringing some pre-understanding to the text. All reading occurs in the context of a tradition of interpretation. The hallmark of responsible reading is its willingness to let the text speak out and, where appropriate, to contradict the tradition within which it is being read. In other words, responsible reading permits the text to maintain its integrity. Or, as Josipovici puts it,

"a book will never draw me out of myself if I only accept as belonging to it what I have already decreed should be there" (Josipovici 1988, 15).

The main reason for delaying the examination of biblical material until this stage of the thesis was to allow the preceding chapters to stress the tradition of interpretation which has informed most readings of the relevant texts (including the readings of their critics). A common factor amongst the theologians examined has been a tendency to favour anthropocentric interpretations of the biblical accounts of the nonhuman creation. If anything, this tendency has been reinforced by the influence of existentialism.

Another factor which has tended to reinforce anthropocentric readings of the text has been the dominance of the historical-critical method amongst biblical scholars. While recognising that the traditional tools of literary criticism have done much to enrich our understanding of the Judaeo-Christian scriptures, it must also be admitted that their analytical approach tends to result in the fragmentation and diachronic reading of the biblical texts. More seriously, a parallel assumption (which usually remains implicit) that the earliest texts (or the earliest stages in the evolution of a text) represent the creative phase of Hebrew (and Christian) theology has resulted in the concentration of effort on these strata (and on the speculative reconstruction of literary and preliterate sources) at the expense of later strata (Anderson 1978, 23-

28). Since some of the most important biblical material on creation and nature is to be found in texts usually regarded as late, this has had the effect of playing down the importance of this aspect of the biblical witness.

More recent forms of literary criticism (specifically structuralism, stylistic criticism, and canonical criticism) have placed more emphasis on a synchronic, wholistic approach to the text. This has had the effect of correcting this particular distortion in our reading. Thus, while allowing source, form, and tradition criticism to make us more aware of the hidden depths within the canonical texts, we must remember that their rightful place is secondary (and preliminary) to theological attention to the texts themselves. After all, it is the texts, and not their sources, which have been preserved and revered as revelatory by the Jewish and Christian communities.

It may be objected that it was precisely this canonical synthesis of disparate and even antagonistic theologies of nature which has led to the present situation. In this case, it might be argued that the historical critical approach has set us free from the traditional misunderstandings and so enabled us to make a new selection of more appropriate attitudes from amongst those on offer in biblical theology. Two responses may be made to this suggestion. First, it would have to be proven that the canonical synthesis was indeed responsible for the exploitative attitude of western society and, second, it may be objected that the selectivity of such a procedure carries

with its presuppositions which may take its practitioners beyond the scope of Christian theology¹.

In what follows I begin to explore what might happen if the Bible were read with the working hypothesis that it does attend to the nonhuman creation (and, not merely as the background to God's dealings with the human race). The sheer quantity of biblical (especially Old Testament) references to the nonhuman creation precludes an exhaustive study. Instead several passages have been selected for detailed examination. They have been chosen to represent major theological strands within the Old and New Testaments and because they speak of the nonhuman creation as such rather than merely using natural imagery to speak of human experience.

1. GENESIS 1-11: THE PRIMAEVAL HISTORY

These chapters constitute the most extensive and most important treatment of creation in the entire biblical tradition. In their canonical form and because of their location, they place the very heart of both the Hebrew and the Christian religious traditions in a cosmic context. From the outset, the God who brought Hebrew slaves out of Egypt and created from them the nation of Israel, who revealed himself in Jesus Christ, and who acted decisively to overcome human sin through Jesus' death and resurrection is presented as the creator of the entire universe. By

reporting the foundational events, not only of the church and the nation of Israel but of the entire universe, the Primaeval History reminds us that the scope of divine activity is more than sufficient to contain salvation history (whether Jewish or Christian). There can be no question of restricting its scope to specifically salvific events. On the contrary, it must be taken to include all things and events.

By the same token, the reporting of these primaeval events in this context (as the prologue to the human drama of salvation history) rules out any merely speculative interest. These events are not merely past occurrences (of academic interest perhaps, but with no relevance to the present) but, rather, "events which laid down what was to be valid for all periods to come" (Steck 1980, 91). A mythological interpretation² is ruled out by the way in which the author has related the foundational events to the present. They are not timeless transcendent realities related to our world through their reenactment in ritual. On the contrary, they stand in clear temporal relation to the events of salvation history.

However, many twentieth century biblical scholars reject this commonsense view. One of the assured results of Old Testament studies is that consciousness of the cosmic scope of God's activity was not part of the religious experience of the earliest Hebrews. Considerable effort has been put into attempts to reconstruct the development of this facet of their experience and it is usually traced to

their consciousness of having been created as a people by Yahweh (e.g., Robinson 1913, 71).

It is less clear how belief in their creation as a people evolved into belief in a cosmic creator but their growing awareness of the surrounding cultures certainly played an important part. In particular, they were forced to reflect on the relationship between Yahweh and the gods of their neighbours and the implications of asserting his preeminence over what were mostly nature deities. Thus the different uses of 'creation' which may be discerned in the Old Testament (Anderson 1984d, 1-24) are widely regarded as stages in the evolution of the concept, with the explicit account of the origination of the nonhuman creation in Genesis 1 as a late extrapolation³ (e.g., Scheffczyk 1970, 5; Young 1976, 27). One effect of these efforts to reconstruct the historical development of Yahwism has been a tendency to make value judgments about the relative worth of the various strata exposed by tradition criticism. Generally speaking this has appeared in the form of a search for an authentic Yahwism assumed to be embedded in the earliest strata of the biblical texts.

The effect on the later cosmic dimensions of the text has been to reduce them to a mere backdrop for the drama of salvation-history. Thus von Rad can say, "Presumptuous as it may sound, Creation is part of the aetiology of Israel!" (von Rad 1975, 138). Biblical statements about creation are to be read with the understanding that the authors intended to collapse creation into soteriology (von Rad 1975, 139).

The roots of this negative attitude are to be found in the philosophical and theological presuppositions described in the preceding chapters. These presuppositions have hindered the use of the Bible as the source for a modern theology of nature.

Only with a different set of presuppositions does it become possible to treat the relevant texts as valid developments rather than potential corruptions of the original faith. The question of which presuppositions to adopt is, for Christian dogmatics, to be answered primarily with reference to the internal evidence afforded by Scripture.

Throughout our examination of the Primaeval History we must bear in mind the following warning, "An almost necessary consequence of separating chs. 1-3 from chs. 4-11 is to misunderstand them. The God-created man and the God-created world are presented not in chs. 1-3 but in chs. 1-11" (Westermann 1974, 24). This misunderstanding is nowhere clearer than in those accounts which, in their concentration on the different strata of tradition (and their interrelationships) within the texts, fail to recognise the care with which the whole has been constructed. That the author of Genesis 1-11 drew on a range of traditional materials is not in question. The attempt to reconstruct his raw materials by means of a diachronic reading of the text is even of some interest. However, it is vital, if misunderstanding is to be avoided, to recognise that he is an author and not merely a redactor or compiler. As

Brueggemann points out, "the traditions are shrewdly held together in the canon. The expositor is not free to choose one at the expense of the other" (Brueggemann 1982, 15). Thus we must take into account the entire text if we are to obtain a coherent theological account of the creation of the physical and biological worlds. Indeed, it is arguable that, in order to understand Genesis 1-11 properly, it must be read in its larger scriptural context rather than as a relatively self-contained unit (Anderson 1984b, 41).

(a) The Priestly hymn of creation

(i) Critical considerations: Because of its canonical location, Genesis 1 is widely regarded as the fundamental text on which to base any Judaeo-Christian theology of creation. It also contains the clearest statements about the nonhuman element of creation to be found in the *Primaeval History*.

Form critical and other literary considerations suggest that the author of the canonical form has drawn on traditional materials to create this introduction. Its strongly rhythmic language and its use of repetitive formulae together with its very pronounced temporal and thematic structure seem to indicate an original Sitz im Leben in the corporate worship of the Hebrew community⁴ (hence the tendency to refer to it as a hymn or litany). Furthermore, there is a clear, albeit implicit, doxological dimension to the text which marks it out as originally part of an act of worship (Westermann 1984, 92).

That this was its most likely original context may be maintained in spite of the difficulties created by its unusual form⁵. Its structure is, indeed, quite striking. In its canonical form the text consists of two major movements (each consisting of four divine acts spread over three days) and concludes with an account of the divine rest on a seventh day⁶. Furthermore there is a clear correspondence between the two movements⁷: the creation of light on the first day corresponding to the creation of sun, moon, and stars on the fourth; the separation of heaven and the waters (of chaos) corresponding to the creation of birds and sea creatures; the separation of dry land from the waters and the creation of vegetation corresponding to the creation of land animals and humankind.

Clearly the material has undergone a significant change in function as a result of being incorporated into its canonical context⁸. The important issue for our purposes is its present function. Westermann describes it as a solemn overture (Westermann 1984, 93). As we have already noted, it has the effect of putting what might otherwise be regarded as esoteric and exclusive traditions in a cosmic context. While by no means denying the believer's right and duty to concentrate on the individual and communal implications of salvation history, it forbids from the outset any attempt to make this the exclusive concern of the believer.

(ii) Ex nihilo or from chaos?: There has been much debate about whether Genesis 1 supports the Christian

doctrine of creatio ex nihilo or a doctrine of divine ordering of a primordial chaos (e.g., Fisher 1965, Lane 1963). At present Old Testament scholarship appears to favour the former interpretation, taking verse 1 as a principal sentence prefixed to the chapter as a whole (Westermann 1984, 94-97). Thus the first verse of the Bible makes an assertion quite unprecedented in Ancient Near Eastern literature: it ascribes the entire work of creation exclusively to the one God.

Of course the conceptual framework of this passage is quite different from that in which the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo evolved. However, both serve to cut off human speculation about origination from a chaotic pre-creation state. In the case of the Priestly writing it demythologises and degrades the primordial chaos which, in the mythology of the Ancient Near East (and, indeed, that of Hellenism) was regarded as the matrix of the gods. The doctrine of creatio ex nihilo may thus be regarded as a legitimate extrapolation of these verses to deny any equation of the creator God with the Platonic demiurge.

How then are we to interpret the Tohuwabohu of verse 2? Is it "nothing more or less than a very concrete way of saying "absolutely nothing whatever"" (Renckens 1964, 84)? Such an interpretation is tempting but does not cohere with subsequent verses in which this dark and watery void is stated explicitly to be the raw material for the divine acts of separation. For the same reason, Barth's suggestion that it is das Nichtige is unsatisfactory (CD III/1, 101-110).

Westermann tells us that "it means the desert waste and is used as the opposite of creation" (Westermann 1984, 103). Elsewhere in the Old Testament it carries sinister overtones: it is a howling waste (Dt. 32:10) where people wander aimlessly (Job 12:24) and perish (Job 6:18). Significantly the concept also appears in the prophetic theme of divine judgment as a de-creation (Is. 24:10, 34:11, 40:23; Jer. 4:23)⁹. But in spite of these overtones it is still an integral part of the reality created by God. Indeed, it is presented as the very substructure of creation. This leads us back to the traditional interpretation of this as the raw material of creation¹⁰.

One final point is worth making about this primordial material. P refrains from attributing its creation directly to God. This attribution appears only as an implication of the verse's qualification by the prefatory remarks of the preceding verse. Instead the attention of the passage is focussed on the creative ordering of that material.

(iii) Creation as a speech-act: At eight points in the text God speaks creatively: "And God said, "Let . . ."" (Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26), and with the exception of the creation of birds and sea creatures the divine speech formula concludes with "And it was so" (Gen. 1:3,7,9,11, 15,24,30). Again it should be noted that this is not peculiar to the Hebrew creation account. There are clear parallels with Memphite theology's account of creation by means of a divine speech-act. Nevertheless, the influence of the prophetic tradition means that P understands creation

in a quite different manner¹¹.

Brueggemann says of these formulae, "God creates by speaking. Creation is to listen and answer. Language is decisive for the being of the world" (Brueggemann 1982, 18). This use of speech as a metaphor for the divine activity of creation suggests something voluntary, effortless, and rational.

It follows that creaturely existence is to be understood as the appropriate response to the divine word. But what sort of speech-act and response are envisaged here? Different answers to this question will result in different understandings of the God-world relationship.

It is undeniable that the speech formulae of Genesis 1 take the form of commands and their fulfilment. Westermann regards this as distinctive of P's entire theological outlook:

Creation through the word as such is not what P is about. P's purpose is to arrange God's work of creation into a network of sentences whose succession follows the pattern of the fulfilment of a command. The word of command has a special significance that colors the whole of P's theology. Everything that happens has its source in God's word of command. The only difference between God's action in history and his action in creation is that in the one case his command is directed to a person (Abraham) or a mediator (Moses), while in the other it is a command without an addressee, and hence a creation command. (Westermann 1984, 85)

The absence of an addressee may suggest that the creative speech-act is best understood as a word of magic¹². However, Westermann points out that such words of magic are essentially a-historical: they belong to the realm of mythological discourse. Such an interpretation of the

creative speech of Genesis 1 is possible only by ignoring its context as the preface to a history. God's word of command in creation operates effortlessly in obtaining what it has defined. But this is not magic, for it is continuous with his words of command spoken in human history.

However, some theologians are uneasy with this emphasis on the divine command in creation. Brueggemann, for example, while admitting its command and execution structure, denies that Genesis 1 is in at all authoritarian. "God gives permission for creation to be. The appearance of creation is a glad act of embrace of this permit" (Brueggemann 1982, 30). More generally, Robert Jenson draws a sharp distinction between promise and command: "a promise poses a future in a very particular way: as gift. All the rest of our communication, various as it is, shares one common character: it poses the future not as gift but as obligation" (Jenson 1973, 7).

Does a command and fulfilment structure, with its attendant obligation upon the creature, result in closure of the future as Jenson's distinction suggests? Clearly it does to a certain extent. The divine commands of Genesis 1 lay down boundaries for all time to come. But they are by no means exhaustive. Every event is founded upon divine command, but it would be a mistake to deduce from this that every event is the direct result of divine command. Thus interpreting these as words of command need not involve us in acceptance of a closed future. Rather, they present God as establishing the permanent basis, the order, the stable

framework without which future possibility would be indistinguishable from chaos.

Brueggemann's interpretation of the divine commands remains tempting. Permission is, after all, a special form of command. It may be said to occupy the middle ground between "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not". "Thou mayst" shares with the creation command the openness of texture described in the preceding paragraph. In placing certain limits on creatures, God is at the same time permitting them considerable freedom¹³. Nevertheless, while there may be theological justification for such an understanding of creation, certain considerations weigh against it as an exegesis of Genesis 1. Its acceptance would suppress certain nuances in the text itself, namely, the parallel activity of divine naming and the different speech formula associated with the creation of humankind.

The divine acts of naming are appropriately dealt with here because of their close association with the divine commands on the first three days of creation. Unlike the creative word, the act of naming does not confer life or being. Instead it expresses the right of the master (Blocher 1984, 67; von Rad 1972a, 53). It suggests an active expression of sovereignty. Significantly, God refrains from naming the specific creatures created on and after the third day: a privilege and responsibility which is at least partially devolved upon the human race in both this and the Yahwistic account.

(iv) The acts of separation and the temporal nature of divine creative activity: What are we to make of the creative activity of the first three days of creation? Is it to be understood simply as a pre-scientific description of the process by which the earth came into being? And, if so, why does God content himself with expressing his lordship over the habitat and not the inhabitant?

The very fact that the process of ordering is closely associated with separation is important. God's good creation is a differentiated totality (Blocher 1984, 71). This contrasts very sharply with Hellenism's denigration of such differentiation as vicious multiplicity.

Westermann argues that the theological purpose of this passage is not to commend to us an (incorrect) historical account of the process by which our world came into being. He points out that the three acts of separation, temporal (night and day), vertical (the waters above and below the firmament) and horizontal (dry land and seas), represent the establishment of the basic categories of time and space which condition all creaturely existence (Westermann 1984, 119). This, in turn, sheds new light on the fact that God actively expresses his sovereignty over these categories.

Also significant is the priority given by P to the category of time. Light is the first of all God's creations because, for P, it makes possible the temporal succession which is the fundamental context of created reality (Westermann 1984, 112). And its separation from darkness creates "the rhythms in which the creation rests"

(Bonhoeffer 1959, 25).

The priority given to the category of time and the placing of creation within a clear temporal sequence clearly distinguishes this text from the cosmological myths of the Ancient Near East. In contrast to the essentially atemporal (hence mythological) creation accounts of their contemporaries the Hebrews worked with an account of God creating the world over a period of seven days which was clearly intended to be related to subsequent history.

The prominence of this temporal sequence becomes even more striking when contrasted with the mode of creation employed by God. As Westermann points out, "it is the work of an instant and not the work of a day" (Westermann 1984, 110). As such, creation by the divine act of speaking does nothing to distance this account from its mythological counterparts. It is this temporal framework, the conception of creation as taking place in time, as a process moving towards a goal in time, which works the transformation. In transferring creation from the mythological realm of transcendent realities into history (or, more precisely, pre-history) P has opened up the way for creation to be seen as continuing in history¹⁴.

The symmetry of the passage, however, seems to run counter to this interpretation. By presenting the six days of divine activity as a balanced pair of groups of three days each, and by making days four to six the fulfilment of days one to three respectively the author has succeeded in making the pre-historic act of creation seem quite self-

contained. This impression of stasis is further reinforced by the account of the seventh day. The very fact of a seventh day suggests completion while the text states unequivocally that, "on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day" (Gen. 2:2). One is therefore not surprised to find that Old Testament scholars regularly interpret the passage in this way. For example, in the course of an article stressing the theme of continuing creation in the Wisdom tradition, Hans-Jürgen Hermisson says of this passage, "For the Priestly writing creation concludes with the seven days, and we cannot speak at all of a continuing creation by Yahweh" (Hermisson 1984, 134). A corollary of this is that the dominium terrae is sometimes interpreted as God's provision of a being to carry on where he has left off. Odil Steck comments that, "after the completion of the work of creation the Creator himself no longer intervenes in it, to give it design and form. Consequently the Creator needs a governor on earth" (Steck 1980, 104).

But is such a semi-deistic interpretation of P's understanding of the God-world relation justified? This verse marks the end of God's creative activity only if Genesis 1-3 is treated in isolation from the rest of the *Primaeval History*. However, such isolation ignores the parallels between the priestly creation narrative and the Flood Narrative. It is clear from the latter that P understands God as active both in nature and history. The view that Gen. 2:4a marks the termination of divine creative

activity is also undermined by Westermann's point about the continuity between the creative commands of Genesis 1 and God's commands in subsequent history.

(v) The de-divinisation of nature: In a more polemical vein, Genesis 1:1-2:4a systematically de-divinises nature. In the above discussion of tohuwabohu we saw that primordial chaos was reduced from the actively aggressive matrix of the gods which must ever be defeated to mere raw material for the categories of existence.

This process is most clearly visible in the unusually long description of the fourth day of creation. It is longer not because it is more detailed than its counterparts but because of extra repetition. P takes particular pains to stress the functions for which the sun, moon, and stars were created. The reason is clear: in the world inhabited by Israel astral deities were of the utmost importance. In 1:14-19 this assumption is completely negated.

A third example of this process of de-divinisation is given by Zimmerli. He points to the significance of the divine blessing in this respect: "It is not nature, it is not an animated cosmos that enables the earth to bring forth plants, and animals and men to be fruitful and to multiply; it is the divine creative word that has opened up these hidden powers" (Zimmerli 1976, 30). Putting it another way, fertility is not an attribute of a divine nature (it is not even a capacity of an autonomous nature) but remains the gift of God the creator.

(vi) The goodness of creation: Seven times in the

course of Genesis 1 God declares the response of creation to his creative command to be good¹⁵. It is striking that non-human creatures are unequivocally stated to be good without reference to humankind. The only suggestion of anthropocentric utilitarianism appears in connection with the creation of the heavenly bodies (and that is explicable in terms of P's polemic against astral cults).

However, this does not mean that creatures are good in themselves. Goodness is not presented as an attribute of creatures either individually or as a whole. Rather, it is a divine judgment about creation.

What, then, does P mean when he has God declare that a creature is good? The Hebrew term, tob, includes but is by no means restricted to a moral judgment. It is a moral judgment (Anderson 1984b, 31), an evaluation of the creatures' correspondence to the divine purpose (von Rad 1972a, 52). However, it also carries the connotation 'beautiful': it involves an aesthetic judgment. This should not be interpreted in terms of Hellenistic aesthetics since

In the Old Testament the beautiful is primarily an event; the proper approach to the beautiful is in this context not the beholding of something which is there, an image or perhaps a statue, but the encounter. The beautiful is experience in the encounter. This is true of beauty both in regard to man and in regard to what has been created. (Westermann 1974, 63)

The divine assessment is thus to be understood not as the result of detached contemplation but of active engagement with the creature. The creature is good and beautiful by virtue of its standing in appropriate relationship to its creator. Bonhoeffer rightly relates

this divine act of seeing to the preservation of creation: "It does not sink back again into the moment of becoming, God sees that it is good and his eye resting upon the work preserves the work in being. . . . The world is preserved not for its own sake but for the sake of the sight of God" (Bonhoeffer 1959, 23).

One point worth emphasising is that the temporal framework is an integral part of the creation which God judges to be very good. The priority given to temporal existence is vital to an understanding of the biblical conception of created existence but it contrasts sharply with much of the Christian tradition. It implies that temporal existence is very good but, more than this, it requires us to accept that the divine purpose for creation is worked out in time. A transhistorical eschaton such as is looked for in the Augustinian tradition is fundamentally incommensurable with this hymn to the creator. Furthermore change, decay, and death are integral to temporal existence: they are not the consequence of human disobedience.

(vii) The divine blessing: In turning to the divine blessings, we are moving from the consideration of creation in general to living creatures. The divine blessing is reserved until the fifth and sixth days where it is applied first to birds and sea creatures (v. 22) and then to human-kind. In addition, we are told that God blessed and hallowed the seventh day.

The fundamental meaning of the verb 'to bless' (which commentators agree is the meaning in use here) is "to confer

the power to be fruitful and multiply" (Westermann 1974, 139f). As we have already noted the text thus wrests responsibility for fertility from an autonomous nature and makes all life the gift of God (clear evidence of P's belief in direct divine involvement in the entire created order).

How are we to understand the absence of such a blessing from the creation of land animals? Westermann argues that P has amalgamated the blessings at this point purely for stylistic reasons and that the only difference lies in the directness with which God addresses the human creature. Thus he insists that,

the same blessing is imparted both to humans and to animals. The blessing is effective for all living creatures . . . This blessing does not give humans any advantage over the animals; it is the power of fertility that makes the continuance of the species possible, as the words of the blessing say unequivocally. (Westermann 1984, 160)

The continuing efficacy of this blessing is illustrated clearly, in the case of humankind, in the genealogies which form such an important part of P's redaction of the *Primaeval History* and *Patriarchal Narratives*. At this point we have once more come close to the theological concept of preservation. Westermann cites W. H. Schmidt to this effect: "Apparently the priestly writing intends the words added to the blessing to indicate the transition from creation to preservation" (Westermann 1984, 161).

This blessing is no mere permission for the maintenance of the status quo. That possibility is ruled out by the overtones of fulfilment in the words of the blessing. It is better understood as a divine commitment to be ever present,

conferring fertility on every living creature and, thus, making the future possible.

(viii) The place of humankind: However, traditional readings of this blessing tend to focus on the special status it appears to confer on humankind. In conjunction with the doctrines of the imago dei and the dominium terrae, such readings form the basis for the contemporary argument that the Genesis account of human origins is intrinsically dualistic and exploitative (of nature).

It is argued that this passage presents an unacceptably anthropocentric picture of creation. Instead of God's creative command we are presented with an image of divine deliberation. Unlike the rest of creation, the first human is addressed directly¹⁶. This act of creation is further emphasised by the appearance of bara' in the account¹⁷; and its location at the end of the hexaemeron suggests that humankind is the climax and purpose of creation¹⁸ (e.g., Lampe 1964, 450).

P clearly intended to distinguish and elevate the creation of humankind over the other creative works. However, it is misleading to see this as an attempt to suppress the intimate relationship between humans and the nonhuman creation (contra Baker 1975, 87). Against such anthropocentric readings we may cite several important features of the text which point to the interdependence of human and nonhuman in God's good creation.

We have already noted that the divine blessing of humankind, while apparently conferring upon them special

status, is actually inclusive of nonhuman living creatures. Additionally humankind is created on the same day as the land animals: suggesting a certain kinship (Blocher 1984, 82). Unlike the other living creatures, humankind is not declared good in itself but only in the context of the whole. Finally, the very fact that the creation of humankind appears in the same passage as the creation of the non-human contrasts with the Ancient Near Eastern tendency to separate cosmogony and anthropogony¹⁹.

(ix) The Image of God and creation as a gift: Lynn White sees the doctrine of the imago dei as creating a dualism which sets humankind over against nature. It relates us to God and alienates us from our fellow creatures.

It is true that many traditional interpretations do suggest the dualism criticised by White. However, the tendency to treat imago dei as a human attribute (that which distinguishes the essentially human from the nonhuman and allies it with God) is by no means universal, nor does it find any particular support in the text.

Other explanations of the imago dei have sought more explicit textual support. For example, Barth sought an explanation in verse 27: "in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Thus the divine image is connected with human sexuality: specifically, with the personal relationship between man and woman entailed in bisexuality. Alternatively, it has been suggested that there is a parallelism between image and dominion in verse

26. However, this latter suggestion is rejected by most modern commentators, who read dominion as a consequence rather than a definition of image (e.g., Barr 1972, 20).

Bonhoeffer lights on the different creation formula of verse 26 as the basis for his explanation of image. Command has given way to deliberation: the created image is not merely commanded to be. If it were, it would not be his image, for Bonhoeffer says of the nonhuman creation,

The work does not resemble the Creator, it is not his image. It is the form of his command. . . . Even in its aliveness the work is dead, because it is an event that has happened, because, while it comes out of freedom, it is itself not free but determined. (Bonhoeffer 1959, 33)

However, the freedom which he discerns in the imago dei is not the formal autonomy of Enlightenment thought. It is not an innate quality or substance possessed by humankind. On the contrary, "freedom is a relationship between two persons. Being free means "being free for the other", because the other has bound me to him. Only in relationship with the other am I free" (Bonhoeffer 1959, 35).

This raises the possibility of understanding the act of creation, at least in relation to humankind, as a gift. Certainly, the act of creating a free being in the above sense is, at the same time, an act of self-giving. But, more than that, the created context in which this freedom in relationship is worked out is itself, by virtue of its createdness, a gift.

This notion of the world as a gift must be clearly distinguished from the classical western scientific view of

the world as a given, a self-enclosed brute fact (Schmitz 1982, 34). The latter places limits upon the possibilities that are open to us; it determines our existence. In contrast to this, the biblical view of the world as a gift opens up new possibilities: "the term gift is rooted in a domain of significance that is charged with discontinuity and contingency, with risk, vulnerability and surprise" (Schmitz 1982, 44).

Understood as a gift, creation points to God as the giver. A gift never refers the recipient only to itself. Rather, in the act of endowment (the dynamics of the gift) the giver offers himself to the recipient: "in this attentive presence he does not only give what is his, he commends himself" (Schmitz 1982, 59).

Then again, a gift which is truly a gift is unconditional. It is gratuitous. Looked at in this light, human dominion over the earth is not merely stewardship. According to P, God places no conditions upon the gift (except the charge to use the gift to the full).

Finally, to understand creation as a gift entails its right reception. Such an understanding is a call for gratitude and openness to the intentions of the giver. There are, of course, inappropriate ways of receiving a gift: strategies for its refusal. For example, the recipient may refuse to acknowledge it as such (thus exploitation of the environment may be related to the denial of the existence and call of a creator); or, he may simply reject the gift itself (e.g., the idealism of much western

theology and spirituality); or, he may refuse to be obligated to the giver (e.g., by insisting on compensating the giver: the path of religious legalism).

(x) Dominion and creation as vocation: We find the command to have dominion over the animals standing in organic relationship to the divine blessing: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (v. 28).

It is sometimes suggested that this command is couched in the language of victory over an adversary: that humankind is called to trample nature underfoot. While it is true that radah sometimes has this meaning (e.g., Joel 4:13), it often signifies the activity of ruling. Furthermore, such terminology was part of the common currency of Ancient Near Eastern court language (Westermann 1984, 159). In a study of this passage, James Barr concludes that it is this derived sense which is used here, and that,

Human exploitation of animal life is not regarded as an inevitable part of human existence, as something given and indeed encouraged by the ideal conditions of the original creation; at most, it is something that comes along later, after a deterioration in the human condition, as a kind of second-best. (Barr 1972, 21)

In any case, the divine gift is not a carte blanche to exploit the environment. The human race is permitted to subdue the earth, but this is a warrant for agriculture and nothing more. We are given the fruit of the earth to be our food. Dominion over the animals does not extend to killing

them for food (or clothing).

Taken together, these considerations rule out any suggestion that the text implies an adversarial view of humankind's relation to the environment. The whole thrust of Genesis 1 is towards an understanding of the environment as a divine gift. It is true that we are distinct from the animals but we are also one with them. This basic tension is subtly expressed by the biblical text when God pauses to reflect before the creation of the human race. The distinction is reinforced by the statement that the human was created in the image of God. But, as Westermann has pointed out, the unity is also reinforced by the fact that the first part of the blessing of the sixth day includes the animals as well as humankind.

The command to have dominion transforms the blessing, at least as far as humankind is concerned, into a divine vocation. And the scope of our dominion is intimately related to the divine blessing. Steck expresses it thus: "The function of man's task as ruler is to guarantee the continuance of the created world as a whole . . . for the benefit of all created life" (Steck 1980, 106). It is a vocation which is best understood in relation to ancient near eastern concepts of kingship. Such a ruler exists for his subjects:

As lord of his realm, the king is responsible not only for the realm; he is the one who bears and mediates blessings for the realm entrusted to him. Man would fail in his royal office of dominion over the earth were he to exploit the earth's resources to the detriment of the land, plant life, animals, rivers, and seas. (Westermann 1974, 52)

As God's vice-gerent on earth, humankind is called to care for the nonhuman, to be responsible for it before God, and to mediate between God and nature: offering the praises of creation to God, and cooperating in the bestowal of divine blessings upon creation.

(b) The origin of humankind according to the Yahwist

Considerable attention has been paid to the Yahwistic element of the Primaeval History in the belief that it represents a very early Israelite creation tradition²⁰. This has led to speculative attempts to reconstruct a Yahwistic Primaeval History which would, it is believed, have formed part of a Davidic precursor of the Pentateuch. The resultant cosmogony is highly anthropocentric.

However, the canonical function of this passage is not that of a cosmogony. As Brueggemann points out "We should not speak of a second, parallel story of creation. Rather, this is a more intense reflection upon the implications of creation for the destiny of humanity" (Brueggemann 1982, 40). Whatever its original function, it now appears as an expansion of the latter half of the sixth day of creation. It functions as an explanatory link between chapter 1's affirmation of the goodness of creation and chapter 6's assertion that creation is filled with and polluted by (human) violence.

(i) Humankind and nature: Genesis 2 certainly underlines our special status but it does not support the suggestion that God has abandoned the rest of creation to

us. Once again our kinship with the animals is noted: it is revealed in the common origin of humankind and animals. Both are created from the earth. J celebrates our sheer physicality. We were called forth from the earth: a direct contradiction of all gnostic, dualistic, or idealistic interpretations of the gospel. Bonhoeffer rightly points out that human bodiliness should recall us to our relationship to the earth, to the nonhuman creation: "In his bodiliness he finds his brother and the earth. As such a creature man of earth and spirit is in the likeness of his Creator, God" (Bonhoeffer 1959, 46).

Two elements of this narrative highlight humankind's distinctive role: Adam is called to till and keep the garden, and God invites him to name the animals. The priestly redactor clearly intends us to understand them as a distinctively Yahwistic form of the dominium terrae.

Naming the creatures is a demonstration of human dominion. Adam is ordering his world, incorporating the animals into his life (von Rad 1972a, 83). It is also a demonstration of human insight and wisdom (Blocher 1984, 91). However the context of this act should not be forgotten. In Genesis 1 God has forgone his right to name the animals; in Genesis 2 Adam does so in the presence of God. Furthermore, the scene arises from the search for a suitable partner for Adam: no animal was suitable but the entertainment of the possibility bears witness to a positive relation to the nonhuman. Thus it is not merely a primitive act of taking control of his environment. It is not the

first step on the road to the exploitation of nature.

(ii) The ambivalence of nature: Adam's disobedience in Genesis 3 and its ecological consequences highlight the ambivalence of nature that was experienced by the Hebrews (and which is shared by country people to this day). On the one hand it is to be recognised as a gift of God but it is also a place of thorns and thistles, of stinging insects and predatory animals. Above all, it threatens us with personal extinction through disease and natural disaster. Remarkably, this ambivalence is explained by the Yahwist not in terms of the recalcitrance of matter but in terms of human disobedience. The disobedience of Adam consisted in his rejection of the divine boundaries placed upon his dominion of the earth (Brueggemann 1982, 51). It was thus a rebellion against the good order of creation established by God in chapter 1.

The result, expressed in terms of divine judgment, is the disruption of the relationships established by God (specifically between God and humankind, between man and woman, and humankind and other creatures). Adam no longer has a harmonious relationship with God, Eve, or nature: he has lost his dominion over the earth. Furthermore, there is no way in which he can regain that dominion for himself: he is barred from Eden by the kerubim, the forces of nature personified²¹.

The present ecological crisis may be regarded as a contemporary expression of that disruption since, "The narrator believes it is the subjection of the world to the

interests and values of man as he breaks away from God which leads to the profound damage and depreciation of the created world that is plain to everyone" (Steck 1980, 75). In this connection it is worth recalling Bonhoeffer's judgment on western technology made some years before society became conscious of an environmental crisis. He argued that technology was fallen humankind's substitute for God's gift of dominion. However, as the story of Babel makes clear, far from being our key to mastery over nature, our fellow men, and ultimately God himself, it is the agent of our enslavement and destruction: "Technology is the power with which the earth grips man and subdues him" (Bonhoeffer 1959, 38). He concludes,

We do not rule because we do not know the world as God's creation, and because we do not receive our dominion as God-given but grasp it for ourselves. There is no 'being-free-from' without 'being-free-for'. There is no dominion without serving God. . . . Without God, without his brother, man loses the earth. (Bonhoeffer 1959, 38)

(c) The Flood and the re-ordering of creation

Source criticism has established that this narrative is a composite of traditional sources. However, it is a composite created with a high degree of artistic and theological skill. Bernhard Anderson stresses the artistic and theological unity of the text with its rising and falling movement²² recalling the flow and ebb of the flood waters of chaos (Anderson 1978).

(i) The interdependence of humankind and nature: The Flood Narrative presents a world in which the vocation of

humankind to be stewards of creation has been supplanted by the quest for autonomy. This quest is characterised by the spread of human violence. However, the unique status of humankind means that this violence corrupts the whole of creation. Violence, hamas, denotes "the flagrant breach of a just order and particularly of an order divinely constituted" (Dumbrell 1984, 20). It is the very antithesis of the divine evaluation of creation in Gen. 1:31.

God's response to this violence is suffering and judgment. In Gen. 6:6, the author speaks of God's grief ('asav): a term which elsewhere expresses the pain of a woman in childbirth (e.g., Gen. 3:16, 1 Chr. 4:9). As Brueggemann points out, "The story is not about the world assaulted and a God who stands remote. It is about the hurt God endures because of and for the sake of his wayward creation" (Brueggemann 1982, 79).

The form of the judgment is in keeping with the spread of violence from humankind to all flesh, i.e., a temporary suspension of the order imposed on the chaos of Gen. 1:2 during the second and third days of creation. There is a virtual return to the initial "waste and void" brought about by the temporary withdrawal of the active divine care implicit in Genesis 1. The way in which the Flood Narrative consciously parallels Genesis 1 clearly implies that the Hebrew conception of creation included an element of continuing divine activity: the suspension of that activity constitutes the divine condemnation of Genesis 7. As we have already commented, this notion of a divine de-creation

is by no means limited to the Primaeval History. The Flood Narrative functions as a paradigm for the prophetic theme of the reversal of creation as divine judgment.

At the same time Noah's family and the animals in the ark constitute the first appearance of that leitmotif of the Old Testament, the faithful remnant. God gives Noah the responsibility of maintaining the continuity of human stewardship of creation by enabling him to preserve the lower animals from the catastrophe that is to overwhelm humankind.

There is no suggestion that God has abdicated responsibility of the earth to humankind: although Noah co-operates willingly with the divine plan there is no doubt that the initiative remains with God. The text leaves the initiative firmly with God both in initiating Noah's project and in closing the doors of the ark against the Flood.

The climax of the Flood Narrative (some would say of the entire Primaeval History, e.g., Brueggemann 1982, 21-22) comes in 8:1. In the midst of God's forgetfulness of creation, we are told that "God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark." Westermann says of the verb used that it "describes a process of thought and action, bridging the internal and the external" (Westermann 1984, 441). This verse marks the beginning of God's gracious turn to the creature and the consequent re-ordering of creation. Significantly the author explicitly includes nonhuman creatures within the sphere of God's gracious remembrance. Having briefly, but

from the perspective of creation disastrously, withdrawn from the relationship he had established in the beginning, God now begins to restore the creator-creature relationship.

(ii) Covenant and creation as promise: This process of re-ordering reaches its climax in the establishment of a berith olam, an everlasting covenant, with Noah and his descendants and every living creature. Covenants which include the nonhuman are a recurring theme in the Old Testament, particularly amongst the prophets (e.g., Hos. 2:18; Jer. 33:20-25; Ezek. 34:25). It is symptomatic of the pervasive anthropocentrism of our culture that so many commentators simply overlook this fact.

What is the content of this covenant? Dumbrell reminds us that "covenants presupposed a set of existing relationships to which by formal ceremony they gave binding expression" (Dumbrell 1984, 20). Here the relationships which receive formal expression are those which endured through the Flood, including Noah's care for the animals. The wording of the covenant recalls the divine blessing of chapter 1. But, in addition to the blessing, God now gives an unconditional promise to maintain for all time the basic conditions of order which are a precondition for being able to respond to the blessing.

The Noahic Covenant institutionalises humankind's alienation from nature by granting us permission to eat flesh. However, it does not constitute a charter to exploit the nonhuman. On the contrary, the divine prohibition on the drinking of blood may be taken as a reminder that human-

kind has not been given arbitrary power over other living creatures (Gowan 1987, 104).

Perhaps the most important point which arises from this is that the meaning of creation is covenantal. An explanation in terms of creation is not mythological (explaining essentially transcendent realities in material terms). Nor is it scientific (an explanation in terms of an autonomous impersonal principle of natural order. When we speak in terms of creation, we are saying, with the Old Testament, that the meaning of our existence and that of our physical environment, is best expressed in terms of the unconditional personal commitment of a transcendent creator.

Finally, it should be noted that the issues raised in the Primaeval History are not settled there. The reality of human violence and the ambivalence of nature carry forward into the Patriarchal History and, thence, to the present. What the Primaeval History leaves us with is the promise residing in the covenant with Noah. The covenant has redemptive implications which concern not only humankind but the whole of God's creation.

2. NATURE IN THE WORSHIP AND WISDOM OF ISRAEL

It is customary to treat these two strands of the Hebrew tradition separately. However, while it is true that their settings in life were different (a difference which must be respected in any joint treatment), it is unlikely that there

was any clear distinction between the users of the two forms. The writer of Wisdom literature (be it the proverbial wisdom of the popular culture or the dramas and poetry of the educated élite) would have taken part in the life and worship of the community: the Psalms were part of his heritage. Similarly the composer of psalms worked in the context of a culture informed by the Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom traditions.

To say this is to reject the marginalisation of Israel's Wisdom tradition which has been customary in Old Testament studies. For example, Zimmerli comments that "Wisdom thinks resolutely within framework of a theology of creation" (Zimmerli 1964, 148). He makes this statement in the course of arguing that the older wisdom literature is not specifically Yahwistic; that it "has no relation to the history between God and Israel" (Zimmerli 1964, 147). The effect is to so emphasise the continuity between Israelite wisdom and its Ancient Near Eastern parallels that it can be regarded as an essentially alien tradition taken over by the Israelites from Canaan or Egypt. Thus it is often asserted that wisdom literature stands apart from the mainline traditions of Israel since it substitutes rationalistic cosmological speculation for salvation history (e.g., Scheffczyk 1970, 27).

In my view, the question of whether or not Israel's wisdom literature is dependent upon or represents a parallel development within the wider culture of the Ancient Near East is of secondary importance. Whatever its provenance,

it became an integral part of Israelite culture. The tendency to marginalise Wisdom stems from the dubious quest for an authentic Yahwism: an Old Testament canon within the canon. Roland Murphy rightly comments that the Old Testament is able to embrace both traditions without any sign of tension, and adds that,

One need not therefore justify wisdom and creation from the standpoint of an alleged "Yahwism" with a relatively narrow track of encounter in salvation history. Rather the concept, as well as the development of creation in wisdom theology, can be accepted as a genuine element (and not merely an importation) of the faith of the Israelites as they encountered the Lord in the created world. (Murphy 1985, 5)

Against the charge that wisdom writing represents a rationalistic alternative to the heilsgeschichtlich orientation of authentic Yahwism it may further be noted that this misrepresents ancient Israelite wisdom. Hermisson notes that "ancient wisdom starts from the conviction that the regularities within the human and the historical-social realm are not in principle different from the ones within the realm of nonhuman phenomena" (Hermisson 1984, 119).

Unlike the Hellenistic development of the concept of an immanent and impersonal logos principle, the Hebrew concept of wisdom makes the personal dimension primary. The result is a wholistic world view in which knowledge of the nonhuman illuminates the human and vice versa. Thus,

For the Hebrew, the order of nature is integrated into the moral and religious order. Its regularity is due to the will of a benevolent deity; but peaceful and orderly relations between God and man are conditioned upon man's submission to the divine regulation of human conduct. A disturbance in the moral order has an inevitable effect in the physical order; God employs

the order of nature to chastise. (McKenzie 1953, 135)

A further reason for treating the Psalms and Wisdom literature jointly in the present context is the significant overlap between them. Thus some of the clearest creation material in the Psalms shows significant wisdom influence²³. Similarly, some of the most important creation material in the Old Testament wisdom literature, namely the divine speeches in Job, takes the form of secondary insertions of psalmic material.

(a) Nature imagery in the Psalms

Like the rest of the Old Testament, the Book of Psalms uses creation and nature imagery in a variety of ways. Apart from those psalms which concentrate more or less exclusively on the praise of God the creator (which will be treated separately) there are a number of creation centred passages where the imagery is used in the service of other theological themes, in particular, the creation of Israel and the maintenance of the social order²⁴.

Psalms 74:13-17 and 77:16-20 are good examples of the use of creation imagery in speaking of the origins of Israel. Both psalms are laments, the former being a communal lament and the latter individual.

In Psalm 74 the psalmist, having bemoaned the devastation of Jerusalem, recalls that, in spite of this, God has shown himself to be sovereign. There then follows the passage in question, in which creation imagery ("thou hast established the luminaries and the sun. Thou hast

fixed all the bounds of the earth") is intermingled with allusions to the Chaoskampf myth ("Thou didst crush the heads of Leviathan") and possible allusions to the Exodus ("Thou didst divide the sea by thy might"). On this basis, the psalmist calls upon God to remember his covenant with the oppressed, that is with the pious poor of Israel²⁵.

Similarly, in Psalm 77 the psalmist concludes his lament by reminding himself of God's former wonders. He focusses on the creation of the people of God in the Exodus but heightens the imagery by drawing on material that would be appropriate to Chaoskampf mythology ("when the waters saw thee, they were afraid; yea, the deep trembled").

Creation imagery also appears where the main focus is on the maintenance of the social order, e.g., in the Enthronement Psalms. Again the psalmists' interests are focussed on the present socio-political situation rather than on any cosmological speculation.

This is where the conscious connection of Hebrew worship and wisdom is of value. When they are treated separately the temptation is to argue that the use of creation in this context is nothing more than imagery: a way of expressing social and existential issues. However, in the light of the prevailing assumptions of Hebrew wisdom, it is clear that the psalmists and those who used their psalms in worship would have recognised a genuine correspondence between the cosmic order and the social order. Thus their references to creation were intended to illuminate and not merely express. God's covenantal care for Israel had real

material (and ecological) implications. Similarly, God's continuing care for his creation had implications for the social and political order. But the validity of the latter depended on the reality of the former. It follows that the references to creation in these contexts may, after all, be used as resources for developing a picture of the Hebrew understanding of creation and nature. As we shall see later, these references are entirely consonant with the major creation theme of both the Psalms and wisdom literature, namely that creation is not a past event but a present reality: that God actively concerns himself with the maintenance of his creation.

(b) The creation psalms

A number of psalms have been singled out by commentators as creation psalms. These are psalms of praise which are distinguished by their concentration on the divine creative activity (past and present). Amongst the psalms usually included in this category are Pss. 8, 19a, 104, 139, 148; Amos 4:13, 5:8f., 9:5f.; parts of 2 Isaiah; Job 38ff (Westermann 1967, 223). In common with the priestly creation tradition examined above, they treat the created order as a divine achievement or gift. It is never a mere datum (Lewis 1961, 71).

(i) Psalm 8: The main theme of Psalm 8 is the status of humankind within the created order. Like Genesis 1, it is one of the major biblical sources of the doctrine of the dominium terrae and is, therefore, a key text for Christian

anthropology. On the face of it, it is less carefully nuanced than its priestly counterpart and has been interpreted as permitting the exercise of naked power in relation to the nonhuman. However, Brueggemann points out that the psalm is so structured as to place this statement about the status of humankind strictly within the context of praise. He adds that

Doxology gives dominion its context and legitimacy. . . . Praise of God without human authority is abdication . . . But to use human power without the context of praise of God is to profane human regency over creation and so usurp more than has been granted. (Brueggemann 1984, 38)

Secondary to this emphasis on the priority of humankind in creation are various statements about the extent of creation. In keeping with the rest of the Old Testament we find that "all things" are described as God's handiwork, and this explicitly includes the moon and the stars²⁶.

(ii) Psalm 19: Psalm 19a, which von Rad argues was the product of Canaanitish influence, agrees with Psalm 8 on the creaturely status of the heavens. It expands on this by asserting that the heavens are, in fact, revelatory of God. This is a corollary of the de-divinisation of the heavens (and, indeed, of all creation) which took place as Hebrew religion developed. As C. S. Lewis perceptively pointed out, such de-divinisation is a necessary prerequisite of any natural revelation (Lewis 1961, 70): only if a creature is clearly understood not to be in any way continuous with God is it possible to have that distance which is necessary for the creature to become a pointer to God.

(c) Psalm 104

This psalm stands out from the other creation psalms because of its exclusive use of the theme of God's creative activity as a basis for praise. However, this distinction has led to the accusation that it is not original to Yahwistic belief (von Rad 1984, 61).

Once again one must ask whether such a negative judgment on a passage of Scripture may be allowed to undermine its dogmatic value. That it is not an alien intrusion into the Old Testament can be seen from its clear relation to the Old Testament Wisdom tradition. This becomes explicit in verse 24 where the psalmist speaks of the rationality of creation in language which is clearly that of wisdom literature. But it is implicit in large tracts of the psalm, e.g., verses 14-23 constitute a catalogue of divine acts reminiscent of the catalogue genre in wisdom literature²⁷: the nearest parallel in Scripture is the divine challenge which forms the climax of the book of Job (Job 38-41). A negative judgment on Psalm 104 implies a similar judgment on the entire corpus of Wisdom literature in the Old Testament. Furthermore, the psalm displays a clear affinity with the priestly account of creation in Genesis 1 (Kidner 1975, 368).

Since the themes of the psalm are broadly the same as those of the priestly creation story it is not necessary to go through it in detail. However, several differences of emphasis must be noted in the interests of achieving a more rounded view of the continuing aspects of God's creative

activity.

The psalm is generally reckoned to consist of eight stanzas. Of these, the first stanza (vv. 1-4) speaks of God's creative activity in the heavens in relation to his glory. It affirms the creaturely status of the heavens and rules out any suggestion that the chaotic forces of nature (the waters, the wind, and fire) might be anything more than servants of the creator. Once again we may discern in this something of the implicit demythologising of the Chaoskampf which goes on throughout the Old Testament.

The second stanza (vv. 5-9) is widely regarded as an allusion to the Noahic Flood and the subsequent re-creation of the earth²⁸. Verse 5 speaks of the establishing of the earth: a concept which, elsewhere in the Old Testament, comes close to the traditional Christian doctrine of preservation. Then in verse 6 the Flood is summarised in a few words. Verses 7 and 8 refer to the divine re-ordering of creation which reaches its climax in verse 9 with the recollection of the divine covenant with Noah (admittedly, presented in less personal terms than those of the Primaeval History). As a whole, the stanza underlines the part played by the ordering (or bounding) of chaos in the Hebrew notion of creation, and it reminds us that this was not a self-contained pre-historical act but, rather, a continuing state which has once been rescinded as an act of judgment. At the same time it recalls the divine promise never again to subject creation as a whole to such a reversion to disorder²⁹.

Subsequent stanzas make repeated use of the Hebrew imperfect tense, indicating that, for the psalmist, the continuing creative activity of God is a basis for praise. He sees God as being immediately responsible for the provision of the basic necessities of life, including the appropriate habitats for different creatures, water, and food.

There are two significant exceptions to this use of the imperfect. In verses 5 and 19 the perfect tense appears instead: signifying historical events which occurred once and for all (but which constitute continuing foundational data of creaturely existence). The first of these is the aforementioned establishment of the earth. The second is a reference to the fourth day of creation: "Thou hast made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting."

Turning to the psalmist's references to humankind, he speaks of the work that is provided by God. God supplies the plants which humankind must cultivate for itself. Thus we are called to share in the responsibility of providing for ourselves. However, apart from this distinction, we are seen as entirely one with the animal kingdom in our dependence on God. This is perhaps the most striking difference between the teaching of this psalm and that of the *Primaeval History*. The emphasis on the special status of humankind is reduced to the level of an implication of this special responsibility. In so doing, the psalmist is able to put greater emphasis on the present sustaining

activity of God. The doxological context makes it inappropriate for the psalmist to draw attention away from the divine activity by stressing the dominium terrae. Thus this omission does not undermine the complementary emphasis of the Primaeval History on humankind's responsibility.

By implication, if God is the sustainer of life, he is also the one who places a limit on life. This element of the biblical teaching has not often found its way into dogmatic treatments of providence (perhaps because of the tendency to see death as necessarily evil). Of course the psalmist immediately balances this truth with the assertion that God is also the giver of life (to individual creatures and not merely in the general sense of being the creator of all). This recalls the blessings of the creation story and also the limitations placed on the taking of animal life in the aftermath of the Flood.

(d) Nature in the Job drama

The creation material in the Book of Job embodies the assumption of this section that treatment of the Psalms and the Wisdom literature can be mutually illuminating. Here in an undisputed piece of Old Testament wisdom are some of the most extensive creation psalms in the Old Testament. With the exception of the divine speeches, the most important creation references in the work are put in the mouth of Job himself: as answers to his friends. The passages in question are 9:5-10 (from Job's reply to Bildad in the first speech cycle), 12:7-10 (from his first reply to Zophar),

26:7-14 (part of a reply to Bildad from the fragmentary third cycle of speeches), and 28:23-27 (presented as part of a concluding general reply).

(i) Job's statements about creation: The first of these (9:5-10) is a passage which is clearly akin to the creation psalms looked at earlier. However, far from reassuring us that all creation is in the hand of God, this poem is deeply disturbing. In language reminiscent of the myth of a primordial conflict Job affirms the sovereignty of God. He is presented as the lord of the earthquake³⁰, "who trampled the waves of the sea" (or "who trampled the back of the sea dragon"). However, for Job, the power of God has become a cause of alienation and God's creative activity is simply incomprehensible.

The same is true of 12:7-10. This passage stresses that humankind and beasts are alike in the hands of God. He has not left creation in a semi-autonomous state but is actively involved in every event. For Job this is a source of disquiet rather than comfort, implying, as it does, that God is directly responsible for his suffering. The larger point being made is that God deals with humankind and the nonhuman in the same apparently amoral way. Most disturbing of all is the appearance of the name Yahweh in this passage (thus underlining the fact that Job holds the God of Israel responsible for his predicament).

The poem quoted in Job 26:5-14 contains no less than a dozen cosmological references from several competing cosmological myths. Once again the primordial conflict is

clearly in evidence: the Creator is the one who "stilled the sea" (v. 12a), "smote Rahab" (v. 12b), and "pierced the fleeing serpent" (v. 13b). There are references reminiscent of the priestly hymn of creation: specifically, the reference to the void (v. 7a) and the separation of light from darkness (v. 10). But the former reference appears in close proximity to an allusion to Canaanite mythology³¹ while the latter contains details found elsewhere in the Old Testament only in Proverbs 8. The overall impression is of a catalogue of divine creative acts drawn from a variety of competing myths and creation stories with little or no regard for coherence. Coherence is unnecessary since the only concern of the poem is the unapproachable awesomeness of the creator. Once again Job is calling into question the possibility of dealings with this being.

It has been suggested that chapter 28, rather than being a continuation of the concluding speech of the dialogue, is a redactional insertion (F. Anderson, 1976, 215). If the Book of Job may be regarded as a drama then this chapter functions like the commentary provided by a chorus between the acts of a play. Whatever its origin, this passage uses creation imagery in a very different way from both Job's speeches and the divine speeches. The passage as a whole speaks of where wisdom is to be sought. In the concluding verses we are, once again, presented with God the creator and orderer of the world. The examples of divine ordering in this passage all allude to the same thing: this God is lord of the storm, a common Old Testament

way of characterising Yahweh. But the conclusion flatly contradicts Job's earlier assertions: this God is the fount of wisdom who freely communicates it to humankind.

(ii) The divine speeches: With the divine speeches we come to the climax of the Book of Job. The drama concludes with a brilliant presentation of Yahweh as the Creator. Indeed S. R. Driver went so far as to say of these chapters, "The first speech of Jehovah transcends all other descriptions of the wonders of creation or the greatness of the Creator, which are to be found either in the Bible or elsewhere" (cited by Rowley 1976, 240).

The character of this divine reply to Job has been much discussed. For many commentators this deluge of counter-questions on the theme of creation seems a grandiose non sequitur: a divine refusal to answer Job's challenge. Some even go so far as to see it as an extended exercise in sarcasm (Rowley 1976, 241) designed to humiliate the unfortunate Job.

However, as the preceding section shows, Yahweh's questions pick up one of the themes of the drama. While their content appears to develop Job's argument that God is unapproachable, the very existence of the divine speeches actually subverts that argument: the divine response shows that Job has not been abandoned.

Against the charge that they were designed to humiliate, Francis Anderson argues that they are too playful, too relaxed to have this effect (F. Anderson 1976, 271). On the contrary, the questions serve an educational

purpose. His experience of natural disaster has left Job unable to discern the divine orderliness of the world. His friends have offered him an anthropocentric rationalisation of natural disaster as just retribution for undisclosed sins. Elihu has taunted him that God's hand is indeed not visible in nature. Now God himself intervenes and transforms Job's complaints about the divine otherness, using them to lead Job into fresh insights.

It has been suggested that these chapters constitute a divine legitimation of natural theology (F. Anderson 1976, 270). However, this is not natural theology as it is commonly understood. Yahweh does not invite Job to seek him in creation. Instead the personal encounter takes priority. It is in the context of the divine response to his complaints that Job is invited to enjoy creation with God. This is no autonomous human quest for God, for God himself is Job's guide.

Yahweh's first speech (38:1-40:2) draws pictures of some twenty creatures both living and nonliving. There is little sense of order in this catalogue, only a general impression of movement from the abstract and cosmic to the particular. Once again we find the free use of mutually contradictory creation imagery drawn from several Ancient Near Eastern myths³². A remarkable feature of these thumbnail sketches is their objectivity. In contrast to much proverbial Wisdom, there is no hint of anthropocentric moralising (contra Baker 1975, 97). No attempt is made to draw morals for the good life from these descriptions of

creation. It is as if Yahweh were encouraging Job to enjoy creation for the sake of its divine artistry and not for any utilitarian purpose.

As far as positive content for a theology of nature is concerned, this speech simply underlines what we have already seen in Psalm 104. God governs the weather and provides for wild animals without reference to humankind. Indeed the text adds that Yahweh brings "rain on a land where no man is . . . to satisfy the waste and desolate land" (38:26f.). Such solicitude for the wilderness is remarkable in view of the sinister connotations of wilderness for the Hebrew mind.

Yahweh's second speech (40:6-41:34) consists of two fantastical nature poems. The prologue to these poems picks up another theme of the earlier speech cycles: Job's insistence that justice must be left to God. Francis Anderson suggests that the point of these poems is to underline that Job can no more exercise jurisdiction in the moral realm than he can control these monsters of the natural world.

Yahweh's apparent satisfaction with Job's replies (40:3-5, 42:1-6) gives the lie to the suggestion that he has been seeking to break Job's will. At the end, Job is subdued. He admits his ignorance but his response hardly constitutes an act of confession, retraction, or submission. Job had spoken without understanding but he stands by what he said (42:3): the encounter with Yahweh has served to reveal to him the full implications of his own position.

3. THE PLACE OF NATURE IN PAULINE CHRISTIANITY

The intellectual context of Pauline Christianity is undoubtedly that of Hellenistic Judaism. New Testament traditions indicate that Paul himself was a diaspora Jew with Roman citizenship who had trained in the rabbinic schools. The churches within his sphere of influence certainly contained Gentile members but his evangelistic methods (as presented in Acts) were aimed particularly at Hellenistic Jews and proselytes. Thus, in reading Paul's letters with an eye to the theme of creation and the natural order, we may take for granted that the original readers were familiar with the general tenor of Old Testament teaching and perhaps also with some of the inter-testamental reflection and speculation on this theme.

The Pauline and deutero-Pauline letters of the New Testament are our main source of information regarding the creation teaching circulating in these churches. In addition to Paul's own views, we find here a range of traditional materials which receive apostolic approval or modification. Since the letters are all occasional, we cannot expect to find dispassionate objective cosmological speculation in them. Cosmology appears only because of its relevance to other subjects. However, this should not be allowed to detract from the importance of the cosmological themes which do appear³³.

The fact that Paul's cosmological teaching appears because of its relevance to other issues prompts us to ask

which issues in particular led to the use of such language. A brief survey of the Pauline letters fails to reveal any strong association between cosmology and a particular doctrine³⁴. In this section we concentrate on two passages which set out most clearly the Pauline position on creation, and which have been widely used in recent years for their ecological implications.

(a) Creation and renewal: Romans 8:18-25

This well-known passage appears in the context of a massive exposition of Habakkuk 2:4b: "He who through faith is righteous shall live" (Rom. 1:17). By chapter 8, Paul has begun to expound what is meant by "shall live." Specifically he is dealing with the new law of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's gift of hope which points us towards our eschatological inheritance. This eschatological dimension has led to the suggestion that Paul's attitude to nature is informed by apocalyptic pessimism. According to this view, Paul's answer

is not a means of redeeming the world of nature as well as the soul of man, so that they can live in harmony to create the Kingdom of God on earth, but a spiritual liberation of those men and women who believe in Jesus, who must then wait for a total remaking of the cosmos in God's own time, and by God's own hand. (Baker 1975, 107)

(i) Creation (ktisis): Any ecological interpretation of this passage will be very sensitive to Paul's use of this key term. There is a wide range of possible interpretations. 'Creation' could mean the entire created order, consisting of the angelic, human (possibly subdivided

into believers and others), and nonhuman orders. Alternatively, it could be used in a more restricted sense to refer to any one or any combination of these sub-orders. Any decision as to Paul's use of the word is complicated by the fact several of the thirteen possible interpretations have been championed by commentators (the only exceptions are those interpretations which have included believing humans to the exclusion of unbelievers).

Was he referring to the entire created order³⁵? This interpretation is rendered unlikely by the involuntary nature of the bondage to which creation is subjected (v. 20). Any interpretation of 'creation' which includes the angelic and human dimensions must be ruled out for the same reason³⁶. We must conclude that ktisis is intended to denote the subhuman created order.

(ii) Futility (mataiotes): This interpretation of ktisis leads to the strange image of nature suffering. Even more bizarre, nature itself is looking forward eagerly to an eschaton which will, amongst other things, mark an end to its bondage.

What does Paul mean when he speaks of the subjection of nature to 'futility'? Mataiotes stands in contrast to telos and means emptiness, futility, meaninglessness, lack of purpose (Gibbs 1971a, 42). It is the Septuagint's translation of hebel or vanity (e.g., Ecc. 1:2). Here, it appears to be synonymous with "bondage to decay" (v. 21). With its reference to "groaning and travailing", the passage clearly points us to Genesis 3 for an explanation of this

term. Thus it seems likely that creation's inability to achieve its telos, to fulfil the purpose of its existence (Cranfield 1975, 413f.; Robinson 1979, 102) is a direct result of the disorder envisaged in Gen. 3:17.

If this is the case, the one who subjected it in hope must be God. However, the responsibility for this state lies firmly with humankind: our place in the created order is such that our disobedience brings with it ecological consequences. Paul does not teach that nature is in itself fallen, rather its telos is inextricably bound up with the destiny of humankind (Lampe 1964, 457; Robinson 1979, 102; Westcott 1890, 135). Our disobedience prevents the natural order from achieving its goal: creation "is cheated of its true fulfilment so long as man, the chief actor in the drama of God's praise, fails to contribute his rational part" (Cranfield 1974, 227).

(iii) Hope (elpis): In spite of this assessment of the cosmic repercussions of evil, Paul emphasises that this divine subjection does not exclude hope from creation. On the contrary, the subhuman creation was subjected "in hope". The present suffering of creation is a "groaning and travailing": it represents the birth pangs which will ultimately give way to joy and fulfilment. Paul sees Christ's redemptive activity as effecting not just the reconciliation of humanity with God but, through that, also the consummation of the entire created order. The nonhuman part of creation is not merely a backdrop to the human drama of salvation history but is itself able to share in the

"glorious liberty" which Paul envisages for the covenant community. What we have here is a Christological and pneumatological (and, hence trinitarian³⁷) transformation of the Old Testament concept of the dominium terrae.

(b) Christ and creation: Colossians 1:15-20

That this important passage was originally part of a hymn in use in the Pauline churches is not in doubt. However, its precise provenance has been much debated. Is it Pauline or non-Pauline? If the latter, did it originate from a Jewish or a Hellenistic source and, in either case, was that source Christian or non-Christian?

There is little disagreement over the first question. The non-Pauline language, theology and style of the hymn rule him out as its author (Cannon 1983, 23-28).

On the second question debate has been fierce. The extreme positions are that the hymn was originally a Jewish midrash on Proverbs 8 (W. D. Davies) or, that it originated from Hellenism as a proto-gnostic hymn (Käsemann). Clearly these views result in very different interpretations of the passage. Käsemann's view lends itself to an interpretation which makes the cosmological material strictly secondary, if not completely irrelevant to the author's intention (Barrett 1962, 85).

While it is true that the passage contains language reminiscent of Hellenistic philosophy, the philosophy in question is stoicism rather than proto-gnosticism. Another difficulty with this view is the presence of terminology

from the wisdom speculation of Hellenistic Judaism (Dunn 1977, 53, 136f.). But perhaps the most telling argument against a pagan Hellenistic provenance is the inherent improbability of Paul or one of his disciples using heretical material in this way.

A simple Jewish origin seems equally unlikely because of the textual evidence of Hellenistic influence and the known intellectual context of the Pauline churches. Thus Cannon argues that "It is not a very helpful procedure to assign certain ideas to Hellenistic provenance and others to Jewish" (Cannon 1983, 30).

Was the origin of the hymn Christian or non-Christian? Käsemann insists that it has little or no distinctively Christian content. However, its appearance in a canonical text suggests that, whatever its origins, it had already become a (Hellenistic Jewish) Christian hymn. As Cannon points out,

By form, content, and use it professes to be a poetic celebration of Christ developed out of the experience of Christian worship. It contains a theology that squares with the confession of the church in other parts of the New Testament. It may not be the way the writer usually expresses his Christology, but it is not really incompatible with it. (Cannon 1983, 31)

A final introductory issue is that of the role of the redactions made by the author of Colossians. Reumann argues that these redactions and the subsequent Pauline commentary on the hymn have the effect of playing down, if not completely subverting, the cosmic implications of the original. Thus,

the underlying hymn does talk of Christ as Lord and creator of "all things," and suggests the world to be his body, so that, seemingly, all men are his and so is the world of nature. But the Pauline author of the finished epistle displays little interest in such points, even though he quotes the entire hymn. (Reumann 1973, 53)

This suggestion must be borne in mind as we examine the text since, if it is true, it must seriously undermine any attempt to derive a cosmic Christology or a theology of nature from this source. Indeed the theology of the letter will have to be seen as a negation of that of the hymn.

(i) Image (Eikon): The hymn begins by claiming of Jesus Christ that, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (v.15). Both titles offer us perspectives on the relationship between creation and redemption.

Eikon signifies that Jesus Christ is the point of contact between the Creator and his creation. He is the one who reveals God to creation and, as such, is naturally associated with the creator rather than the creation. Any possible misinterpretation of this along Hellenistic lines (as suggesting that he is in some respect inferior to the creator in being, after all, only the visible image of God) is ruled out by the synonymous parallelism with prototokos (firstborn). The latter term, which expresses the concept of pre-existence, is characteristically Jewish. Thus, as Schweizer points out, "He is not merely the first but passive object of God's activity, but simultaneously he is the acting subject who extends God's activity to the creatures that follow him" (Schweizer 1982, 67). Thus the

hymn ascribes to Jesus Christ the role reserved in pre-Christian Judaism for divine wisdom (e.g., Wisd. 9:4,9; Prov. 8:22; Sir. 1:4, 24:9).

Implicit in this identification of Jesus Christ as the image of God is a Christological reinterpretation of the imago dei concept. Thus the restoration of the image of God in humankind becomes part of the Christian vocation: we are called to be conformed to Christ, the paradigmatic image of God. At the same time the close connection made in the Old Testament between the divine image and humankind's dominion over the material creation means that the latter concept must undergo a similar transformation.

(ii) Creation in, through, and for Christ: Verses 16 and 17, in expounding the prototokos title, offer the clearest Pauline (or deutero-Pauline) expression of this Christological development of the doctrine of creation. They present Christ as the agent of God's creative activity when they say that all things (ta panta) were created through him. Lohse comments that, "The Christian confession appropriates this view of Wisdom's role as the agent of creation and transfers it to Christ in order to express the universal validity of the Christ-event" (Lohse 1971, 50). Needless to say this reinterpretation in no way diminishes the cosmic significance of what is being said here.

Furthermore, Christ is the frame of reference for creation: all things were created in him, i.e., with reference to or in relation to him. In other words, Christ is the context of creation. This may be a literal statement

about the location of creation. If so, the reference to the church as Christ's body may be seen as a redaction (eliminating an earlier reference to the cosmos as the body of Christ). Lohse points out that at least one strand of Hellenistic Judaism accepted such a pantheistic view (Lohse 1971, 54). However, a metaphorical interpretation would be consistent with the view of divine wisdom held by more orthodox branches of Hellenistic Judaism: a view which probably provided the basis of John's conception of Christ as logos or Word (a term whose Stoic connotations include, "the scheme according to which things move, and the power that makes them move")³⁸.

The passage goes on to refer not only the origins of the cosmos but also its goal to Christ. All things were created for him, i.e., to be subject to and to glorify him. Much has been made of the fact that verse 16 is similar to prepositional formulae found in Stoicism³⁹. However, this part of the verse reveals how deep the divergence really is. The Stoic formulae use a succession of prepositions to point to the final unity of all that exists. Instead of being self-contained in this way, the cosmos envisaged in this hymn is in movement towards its eschatological end, namely, Jesus Christ. As Schweizer points out, "This means that the world cannot be understood in the Stoic sense as the continuously available presence of God; it can only be understood with reference to God's activity, which extends from the creation to the consummation" (Schweizer 1982, 71).

In expanding on the creative agency of Christ, verse 17

adds that "in him all things hold together". The use of the perfect tense here makes it clear that a reference to a continuing activity is meant. Put another way, all things continue and cohere in Christ. He is the sole basis of unity and purpose in the cosmos. Again the hymn has substituted Jesus Christ for divine wisdom: he becomes the personal basis of unity which allowed the Hebrews to discern a real correspondence between the moral and natural orders. He is the foundation upon which God has established the earth⁴⁰. Indeed for Christian theology the very notion of 'cosmos' must be Christocentric (i.e., it must be defined with reference to Christ as its basis). By thus making Christ the basis of the order of nature this passage appropriates to Christ the creative activity of ordering the cosmos which we noted in both the Primaeval History and Psalm 104. In other words his role in creation is by no means limited to creatio ex nihilo but includes the continuing maintenance of the cosmic order. Thus Christ is also presented as the divine agent of the preservation of the cosmos.

(iii) The reconciliation of all things: The hymn concludes with a reference to the cosmic significance of Christ's sacrifice(vv. 19, 20).

Because of the cosmic dimension already ascribed to him it is appropriate to see him as reconciling to himself all things (ta panta) and not merely the community of believers or even the entire alienated human race. Again the Colossian hymn parallels the Prologue of John, i.e., the

maintenance of the Old Testament link between redemption and creation (or new creation). But the way in which it makes this connection raises the question of whether the nonhuman creation is to be regarded as fallen and how Christ's activity in redeeming fallen humankind can be said to have cosmic effects. As we have seen from our study of Romans 8, creation is better described as in a state of involuntary subjection due to humankind's rebellion rather than itself being regarded as fallen.

The effect of the redactions on the hymn is twofold: they stress the universality of the Christ event and the centrality of the cross in the work of reconciliation. As a result we have to regard the crucifixion as the event which sets the seal on the divine covenant which reconciles all things to God.

(c) The Pauline View of Creation: Concluding Comments

Both the context and content of the above passages indicate that the Pauline tradition followed the Old Testament in integrating creation and redemption. Contrary to the readings of those who are steeped in the law-gospel and nature-grace dichotomies, there is no evidence of a dualism between creation and redemption. Nor does it appear that creation was subordinated to redemption. Gibbs rightly concludes that, "God's redemptive action presupposes the creation, includes the creation, and is undertaken in the face of the reality of evil, which cannot prevail because of Jesus' lordship through his mediation in the works of

creation and redemption" (Gibbs 1971a, 139).

For Pauline Christianity, redemption extended beyond the community of believers to include the fulfilment of the telos of all of creation. It was not understood as a re-creation (contrary to the apocalyptic language of some biblical passages). Applied cosmically, the term 'new creation' would have referred to the transformation and fulfilment of this creation (just as its application to humankind indicated the believer in his continuity and discontinuity with his old self).

5. CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen in preceding chapters there has been a recurring tendency to treat the nonhuman creation as a temporary expedient which will ultimately be supplanted by a purely spiritual fulfilment. Such a tendency finds no basis in the biblical texts we have examined. At most the influence of apocalyptic gives rise to passages which suggest the divine transformation of the world (e.g., Is. 65:17-25; Rev. 21, 22). But nowhere is it suggested that the biophysical universe will cease to be. On the contrary, it too will share in the eschatological fulfilment prefigured by God's redemptive activity in relation to humankind (Rom. 8:21). This is further supported by the Old Testament's insistence on the goodness of the nonhuman creation (Gn. 1); God's fatherly care for even those aspects

of nature which threaten humankind (Ps. 104); and, its understanding of the nonhuman creation as the abiding context for divine-human encounter (Job 38, 39).

However, granted that the Bible does not display such extreme antipathy towards the nonhuman, environmentalists still criticise it on the grounds of its ambivalence towards nature and its anthropocentricity. Does our examination of key biblical texts do anything to deflect these criticisms?

The Bible is sometimes accused of sharing in and even of giving rise to the ambivalence which has been detected in subsequent Christian attitudes to nature. Typical is Santmire's accusation that the Johannine tradition is guilty of injecting a degree of ambiguity into the Bible (Santmire 1985, 210-15). But our studies suggest that this accusation is both too narrow and too sweeping.

It is too narrow in the sense that an element of ambivalence is built into all the texts we have studied. The Bible is neither unambiguously favourable or unfavourable towards the nonhuman creation. It has become a place of thorns; it can fill us with the horror vacui experienced by Job; it is groaning and travailing. Above all the writers of both Testaments are well aware of humankind's capacity for misinterpreting nature. The religious history of Israel appears as a prolonged struggle against a variety of nature cults. While Paul (whom Santmire regards as the most ecologically sound New Testament author) begins his letter to the Romans with the most detailed warning about the dangers of such misinterpretation.

On the other hand, Santmire's accusation is too sweeping since it does not enquire whether this biblical ambivalence to nature is necessarily destructive. The other side of the coin is that the Bible never questions the goodness of creation as such. This is virtually the first tenet of the canonical text and all the subsequent reservations about nature are no more than qualifications of it. Ultimately the negativities perceived in nature are never regarded as inherent in it but rather the result of its subjection to fallen humankind.

Corresponding to this proper ambivalence with regard to nature the biblical traditions present us with proper and improper ways of enjoying creation. The key to a proper enjoyment of nature is the perception of it as divine gift. Responsible stewardship would be a minimalist description of the behaviour that should flow from this perception. Conversely any perception of nature which fails to take account of its character as a gift of God's love will give rise to a range of improper ways of enjoying it.

A further consequence of the biblical perception of nature as divine gift that one must recognise a degree of anthropocentricity. This is clear from explicit statements such as the dominium terrae but is also implicit in the freedom with which creation imagery is pressed into the service of other doctrines⁴¹. Indeed, there is a sense in which the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures are wholly anthropocentric. However, this anthropocentricity is severely qualified by the Hebrew understanding of lordship

and, in the New Testament, by its Christological reinterpretation.

Finally, it is clear from the passages examined that this anthropocentricity is not such as would exclude a proper consideration of the nonhuman. Yahweh is consistently presented as the Creator of all things who cares for every one of his creatures (even those which are irrelevant or even threatening to human interests). In the Old Testament the nonhuman clearly has standing before God and the New Testament, while less explicit than the Old, never departs from this assessment. Thus the biblical traditions never condone the later Christian antipathy towards nature⁴² either in its idealistic form or its utilitarian form.

NOTES

1. Theology is 'Christian' if and only if it is carried on in the context of dialogue with the foundational documents and major traditions of the Christian faith. A degree of selectivity is unavoidable in any such dialogue. However, the Judaeo-Christian scriptures should remain the controlling factor. The systematic selectivity of some theologians of nature suggests that this is no longer the case.
2. The idea that the Genesis account of creation is mythological, while largely out of favour with theologians and biblical scholars, is still to be found in scholarly works in related fields. One recent example is Niditch 1985. Her approach, which relies heavily on input from comparative religion and psychoanalysis, operates with the presupposition that a search for origins is implicitly a search for self.
3. Schmid 1984 rejects this commonly held view that creation faith is found only later in the Bible (or not at all). On the contrary, it is, he argues, fundamental to the ideology of kingship developed contemporaneously with the earliest written sections of the Old Testament. However, he maintains that the

cosmic dimensions of creation faith are secondary to the political dimension: that creation was, in the first instance, a symbol for the divine constitution of the nation of Israel.

4. There is no such agreement about the context or function of its final redaction (Landes 1974, 280).
5. I have called it a hymn but, while the features mentioned are suggestive of some sort of poetic text, its form is quite unlike that of comparable Hebrew liturgical poetry. Nor is Brueggemann's suggested designation of litany any more appropriate since there is no evidence of a congregational response in the text.
6. This structure, while striking, is by no means unique in Ancient Near Eastern literature. A similar 6+1 pattern was not uncommon amongst Ancient Near Eastern authors. Only its appearance as the temporal framework of a creation narrative remains unprecedented (Blocher 1984, 53).
7. This correspondence has been recognised since mediaeval times when a distinction was made between the work of separation (the first three days) and the work of adornment (the second movement). And in our own era explicit references to the correspondence date back at least to Herder (Blocher 1984, 51).
8. Westermann 1984 offers a two stage explanation of the transition from the original context to its present canonical situation. First, it was detached from its original cultic context and circulated as an independent creation story. It was at this stage that it acquired the function of an account of human and world origins. The second stage is its insertion into its present context.
9. The use of the reversal of creation imagery in relation to the proclamation of divine judgment is an unmistakable feature of Old Testament prophecy before, during, and after the Exile. While, of itself, adding little to a positive understanding of Old Testament attitudes towards the nonhuman creation, this theme does imply the existence from pre-exilic times of a positive creation theology.
10. This suggestion dates back at least to Augustine and is to be found in the writings of most orthodox theologians. However, one caveat should be noted. It is philologically unlikely that it refers to an initial act of creation in verse 1 (Blocher 1984, 64).
11. After a careful discussion of the similarities, Westermann concludes that "It is to be expected that there will be points of contact, similarities, and agreements in the stories of creation and of primaeval events. The question of dependence therefore is of no real significance" (Westermann 1984, 41).

12. Comparisons are often made with Marduk's destruction and recreation of a piece of cloth in Enuma Elish, Tablet IV, lines 22-26. While the wording of the commands is similar the immediate context of this account is not creation but a demonstration of divine power. Significantly, Marduk does not create the world by a word of command.
13. Compare the Yahwistic account of the creation of man. The only limit is the prohibition regarding the fruit from the tree in the centre of the garden.
14. As we shall see when we turn to the Psalms and the Wisdom tradition, the conception of continuing creation was already an important part of Israelite traditions. P's achievement was to recognise that this historicising of creation enabled the reconciliation of Israelite doxology with this tradition concerning world origins.
15. In verses 4 (light), 10 (earth and seas), 12 (vegetation), 18 (sun, moon, and stars), 21 (birds and sea creatures), 25 (land animals excluding man), and 31 (a summary verse in which creation as a whole is judged to be very good).
16. Those who argue in this way ignore the commonsense reason for this.
17. Westermann 1984 argues convincingly against such efforts to read special theological significance into P's use of bara'.
18. This argument has been disputed by a number of commentators and theologians. They point out that the climax of the story is not the creation of man but the sabbath rest in which all creation worships God (e.g., Moltmann 1985, 276-87).
19. e.g., the creation of man is presented as a mere afterthought in the Enuma Elish. A fuller treatment is reserved for the Atrahasis Epic.
20. One of the chief opponents of attempts to develop a biblical theology of nature, John Reumann, concentrates upon the Yahwistic account to the complete exclusion of Genesis 1 (Reumann 1973, 31-42).
21. It is apparent from their appearance in Isaiah and Ezekiel that the kerubim were not angels (Blocher 1984, 188). Blocher describes them as "a concentrated form of the universe itself, summed up in its more glorious figures, but insofar as it remains at the disposal of the Lord and acts as the instrument of his power" (Blocher 1984, 189). Thus, in the context of Genesis 3, the guardian of the entrance to Eden personifies the resistance of the created order to Adam's efforts to master it.
22. It may be analysed as follows:

TRANSITIONAL INTRODUCTION

- RETURN TO CHAOS: 1. Violence in creation (6:11-12)
2. Resolution to destroy (6:13-22)
3. Command to enter ark (7:1-10)
4. Beginning of Flood (7:11-16)
5. Rising waters (7:17-29)

GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF NOAH

- NEW CREATION: 5. Receding waters (8:2-5)
4. Drying of earth (8:6-14)
3. Command to leave ark (8:15-19)
2. Resolution to preserve order (8:20-22)
1. Covenant blessing, and peace (9:1-7)

23. Thus a recent article on creation in the wisdom literature used as its main texts material from the Book of Psalms (Hermisson 1984). This was given classical expression by von Rad 1984, 62.
24. Reumann 1973, 69-73 stresses these uses to the exclusion of all else in his effort to show that biblical faith uses creation imagery only in the service of salvation history.
25. The extension of 'the oppressed' to refer to the non-human creation may be a legitimate recontextualisation (cf. its extension by the prophets to refer to resident aliens) but it does not reflect the author's intention.
26. As with Genesis 1 we would expect a polemical element here.
27. It is arguable that the similarity between this psalm and the Hymn of Akhnaten lies more at this formal level than at the level of content. Consequently it is going too far to assert direct influence as von Rad does.
28. Anderson 1984d, 13 is representative of the majority view. However, Hermisson argues that 'the waters' of verse 6 cannot be the subject of the verbs in verse 8a (Hermisson 1984, 125, 134). In favour of the majority position it must be noted that Hermisson's reading is intended to establish the permanence of God's original ordering: a conclusion which brings the psalm into sharp conflict with the Genesis Flood narrative.
29. This promise, which reflects the promise enshrined in the Noahic covenant, does appear to contradict the prophetic use of de-creation as a way of expressing the divine judgment.
30. This is a recurrent theme of the Old Testament, which often associates theophanies of Yahweh with earthquakes, storms and fire (e.g., 1 Ki. 19).
31. The reference to Sapon (the north) in verse 7a, is an allusion to the primaeval world-mountain of Canaanite myth.
32. e.g., at one point creation is likened to an architectural masterpiece while, at another, the metaphor of birth is used of the sea. In the latter case, we again see the tendency to demythologise ancient myths. The sense of danger associated with the sea is gone. It has been reduced from a primordial

enemy to an unruly child.

33. It could be said that the author was interested only in the current use of the cosmological material: that he wrote without reflecting on the secondary cosmological implications of what he said. It would follow that we could discount those implications. Reumann uses this approach to discredit the cosmological teaching of Romans 8, arguing that Paul used an apocalyptic fragment out of context to correct an over-emphatic realised eschatology (Reumann 1973, 99).

Against this, it should be recalled that the occasional nature of Paul's letters does not imply that they are informal or spontaneous (contra Adolf Deissmann). It is arguable that,

Although each of Paul's letters were related to some concrete historical situation they should not be regarded as informal, impromptu writings but rather as substitutes for Paul's personal apostolic presence and his authoritative word to the churches for which he regarded himself responsible. (Cannon 1983, 138)

34. Pauline references to creation and nature occur in the following contexts: doxological (Rom. 11:33-36, Col. 1:15-20), creedal (1 Cor. 8:6), Christological (Rom. 5, 1 Cor. 15), soteriological (Rom. 8), in relation to baptism (Eph. 2:10, Col. 3:10), and in relation to ethical questions (1 Cor. 10:26, 2 Cor. 9:7ff., 1 Tim. 4:3f.). This list is by no means exhaustive and there is considerable overlap between the categories (e.g., Col. 1:15-20 is an expression of Christian worship being used because of its Christological and soteriological implications).
35. This interpretation dates back at least to Origen but has recently been defended by Gibbs 1971.
36. This eliminates the views of Augustine (all mankind); Schlatter (unbelievers); Pelagius, and Fuchs (the angelic creation); Theodore (angels and the sub-human creation); and Barth (humankind and the sub-human creation, but with the emphasis on the former so that, in practise, his interpretation tends to that of Augustine).
37. Robert Jenson calls this chapter "The most remarkable trinitarian passage in the New Testament . . . amounting to an entire theological system" (Jenson 1982b, 44).
38. Note that the original reference to the body of Christ in this hymn need not have been cosmological. O'Brien 1982 points out that elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, soma is used to refer to local congregations. Thus the redaction may have been an editorial gloss to prevent confusion with the pantheistic possibility rather than a correction.
39. e.g., "All things come from you, subsist in you, go back to you" (M. Ant. 4.23.2 cited by Lohse 1971, 52).
40. And in this way we see another connection between Jesus Christ and the Old Testament covenantal concept of

creation.

41. This point is made very clearly by Reumann 1973 and Stuhlmueeller 1970. However, as we have seen, Reumann is incorrect when he concludes that this is the only use of creation language.
42. However, it has to be admitted that once such antipathy has gained the ascendancy there are passages of Scripture which may be reinterpreted to support it.

CHAPTER 6

THE TRINITY AND THE KINGDOM OF NATURE

1. THE DYNAMIC TRINITY

In the preceding chapters I have suggested that there is a correlation between the Christian doctrines of creation and the Trinity. The Christian doctrine of creation is discourse about the establishment, maintenance, and consummation of the relationship between the triune God and his world. Thus an inadequate doctrine of the Trinity will be unable to sustain an adequate doctrine of creation.

My examination of the biblical traditions suggests that there is a proper ambivalence towards the material creation within Christianity. However, where it has been influenced by an Augustinian doctrine of God, that ambivalence has tended to give way to antipathy. The Reformed tradition, on the other hand, has modified Augustinianism in the direction both of a more positive attitude to nature and a more fully trinitarian interpretation of the Trinity.

In this final chapter I shall examine more closely the correlation between the doctrines of the Trinity and of creation. Given an alternative doctrine of the Trinity, it should be possible to develop an account of the

relationships between God, humankind, and the nonhuman creation which more closely reflects that of the Bible. As I noted in Chapter 1, Eastern Orthodoxy appears to combine a more positive view of the natural world with a distinctive trinitarian theology. Thus a fruitful starting point might well be the doctrine of the Trinity developed by the Cappadocian Fathers in their struggle with Arianism.

(a) The Cappadocian understanding of the Trinity

The Cappadocian Fathers' understanding of the God-world relationship has been the subject of some dispute. It is sometimes suggested that their insistence on the full deity of Christ, while solving pressing theological issues, did nothing to clarify this relationship (Young 1983, 112). In this connection, James Mackey questions their rejection of subordinationism (Mackey 1983, 142); and Kaiser presents their approach as a quest for rationality at the expense of alienation from the historical roots of the doctrine in the divine self-revelation (Kaiser 1982, 73).

However, others have pointed out that this insistence on the full deity of Christ has to be understood in the context of a novel way of interpreting the nature of God. It is simply misleading to argue, as Tillich does, that their approach is coherent only in the context of Neoplatonism and that in any other context it must degenerate into tritheism (Tillich 1968, 76-79). On the contrary, it constitutes a rejection of the cosmological approach of Neoplatonism, Origen and Augustine¹.

The full deity of Christ is central to the Cappadocian understanding of God. Their affirmation that Christ takes his origin from the very being of the Father implies there is genuine differentiation within the Godhead. Thus the being of God is to be understood in terms of relationships rather than a divine substance (Jenson 1982b, 85). Furthermore, it becomes possible to speak of different kinds of relationship both internal and external to the Godhead: to distinguish between, on the one hand, generation and procession (the Spirit is not a second Son) and, on the other, generation and creation (the Son is not a creature).

Their affirmation that Christ is homooousios with the Father takes this relational understanding a stage further. The incarnate Jesus Christ is not merely revelatory of God but actually is God. The Cappadocian God is one "whose own deity is not separable from a figure of our temporal history" (Jenson 1982b, 87). Such a God must be intimately involved not only in salvation history or human history but in creation history as a whole.

(i) The three hypostases: The background of the Cappadocian doctrine of the Trinity was the difficulty created by the tension between the content of the Christian revelation and the dominant form of trinitarianism at the beginning of the fourth century. This tension gave way to crisis with the reaction to Arius and the Council of Nicaea. The problem faced by the Cappadocians was that of the rational articulation of orthodox trinitarianism as enshrined in the Nicene Creed and the Church's worship.

In essence they sought a coherent way of maintaining simultaneously that God is both one and many, and that his activity is not constrained by any necessity. Furthermore, the Nicene Creed ruled out the easy options of modalism, subordinationism, and adoptionism.

The starting point of their solution was an emphasis on the divine economy. They maintained the full deity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit on the strength of the witness of revelation and the Church's experience of the incarnate Logos and the Holy Spirit as agents of salvation (Meyendorff 1975, 180). Thus, for the Cappadocians, one of the major tasks of trinitarian discourse was to provide a coherent account of the relation between God and his activity.

In keeping with this emphasis on the Persons, the Cappadocians proceeded by re-examining the terminology in use in the Christian doctrine of God. The outcome was a transformation of the concept of substance (ousia, phusis) and the redefinition of Person (hypostasis).

Their new understanding of substance amounted to an outright rejection of the Hellenistic understanding of the concept. The Greek language permitted three different ways of posing the question of being. One could enquire as to the fact of something's existence, the identity (or content) of the existent, or its way of existing. In Hellenistic philosophy substance was the answer to the second of these questions: the identity of an existent. Furthermore it was specifiable and logically prior to an entity's way of existing.

The Cappadocians could no longer understand substance in this way. Far from being specifiable, divine substance was entirely incomprehensible. This should not be seen as an admission of irrationality or incoherence; nor was it a deliberate mystification of the doctrine of God. On the contrary, it was meant in an entirely positive sense: as the epistemological correlative of their affirmation of the infinitude of God. Only finite substances are specifiable². This insistence prevented the identification of the divine substance with the Father, thus ruling out the Eunomian form of subordinationism. At the same time as rejecting its specifiability, they denied its logical priority over an existent's way of being. Thus the divine substance had now to be regarded as logically simultaneous with God's way of being as Trinity.

The other important change in trinitarian terminology was their redefinition of hypostasis. Originally this term was identical with ousia and, as a result, its use for the divine Persons easily gave rise to the suspicion of tritheism. However, in addition to denoting the underlying substrate, or substance, of an entity, hypostasis could also denote its individuality. It was this secondary meaning which the Cappadocians emphasised by connecting the word more closely with prosopon.

The implications of this redefinition were twofold. By using hypostasis to refer to the divine Persons, the Cappadocians were able to give them ontological content. The Persons could no longer be regarded merely as roles or

successive modes of being of the one God. On the contrary, the Persons were seen to be constitutive of God (Zizioulas 1985, 39). At the same time, the connection with prosopon permitted the connotation of relationship and freedom rather than the bare individuality which the word originally denoted. Thus the trinitarian terminology was enriched and the possibility of a relational ontology was created.

The outcome of this work of reinterpretation was a Trinity in which God is three hypostases. There is no longer any room for the view that God might take on three successive roles, or that God (Father) might posit two lesser deities. These hypostases are distinguished only by their mutual relationships: "the Father is not Son, and yet this is not due to either deficiency or subjection of essence; but the very fact of being unbegotten or begotten, or proceeding, has given the name of Father to the first, of the Son to the second, and to the third . . . of the Holy Ghost" (Gregory of Nazianzus, Theol. Or., 5.9).

Furthermore, as Gregory's statement suggests, these mutual relationships are not ontological distinctions: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not understood as distinct levels of being. It follows that the Persons are co-eternal (Gregory of Nazianzus, Theol. Or., 5.4), and co-equal³.

(ii) Perichoresis and the divine ousia: If we are no longer permitted to think of the Trinity as three Persons united by a common underlying substance, how can we maintain the unity of the Christian God? The Cappadocians sought this unity in God's threefold existence as Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit. Unity must be a function of the inter-relationships between the Persons.

The basis of this unity is the Father, whom the Cappadocians, following an earlier Patristic insight, continued to regard as arche, as fons trinitatis. By maintaining that the Father is the fount of the Trinity, they imported causality into the Godhead. However, this was not a natural causality (which would have implied a unity based in a common substance and would have led to the suppression of the trinitarian distinctions) but a personal causality. Such a personal conception of causality implies a personal unity which actually entails the personal distinctions. Expressing it rather differently, the Father is the cause of the Trinity, but Father is a relational term: it is defined by reference to Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore the causality of the Father cannot be understood apart from the simultaneous existence of the other Persons.

The concept which most fully expresses this personal unity of interrelationship is that of perichoresis. This asserts the complete mutual interpenetration of the hypostases. They are distinguishable only by their relation to the others: they cannot be defined by their roles in the divine economy (Gregory of Nyssa, Abl., 261f., 263). In other words, the hypostases are ontologically inseparable⁴.

How does this understanding of the hypostases and their unity affect the concept of the divine ousia? As Gregory of Nazianzus pointed out (Theol. Or. 5.4), the co-eternity of the hypostases implies that the divine substance has no

existence apart from the Persons. He illustrates what he means by the vivid analogy of three suns focussed into one beam (Gregory of Nazianzus, Theol. Or. 5.14).

Gregory of Nyssa underlines this revision of the concept of divine substance with his assertion that ousia is not a name signifying divine nature (Abl., 259). On the contrary, it signifies a divine operation (Abl., 261). Jenson interprets this as meaning that 'God' is a predicate rather than a subject (Jenson 1982b, 113). These assertions appear to contradict the Cappadocian use of the social analogy for the Trinity (e.g., Gregory of Nyssa, Abl.; Gregory of Nazianzus, Theol. Or. 5.15). This analogy is intended to suggest ousia and hypostasis are related in a manner analogous to that of universal and particular. The apparent contradiction is resolved by reading Gregory of Nyssa's assertions as denying the existence of a (static) unitary substrate beneath the hypostases and redefining ousia in terms of the dynamic personal unity of the hypostases.

The outcome is that, for the Cappadocians, God could no longer be considered a static divine substance. On the contrary, God is boundless life, activity, or event. Thus we find the Cappadocians asserting the divine infinitude against the consensus of Hellenistic philosophy (e.g., Gregory of Nyssa, Abl., 262-66).

An important implication of this understanding of God is that the eastern understanding of the telos of creation is very different from that which evolved under Augustinian

influence. The telos of the creature is not the rational contemplation of the divine essence. On the contrary, it is active participation in the divine activity (Meyendorff 1975, 133). The creature is called to live and move within the infinite richness of the divine activity: to be a shadow forever chasing the light of God.

(iii) Comments and criticism: However, the eastern approach is itself by no means immune from the criticisms which have been directed at Augustinian theology in the preceding chapters. The contrast between east and west is not as clear cut as some apologists for Eastern Orthodoxy would have us believe. Indeed Augustine himself is accepted by most Orthodox scholars as one of the Fathers⁵ (though admittedly, one whose work has to be interpreted in the light of the insights of the Cappadocians and subsequent eastern Fathers).

Careful selection of Cappadocian (and later Orthodox) texts reveals passages in which typically Augustinian sentiments are expressed. For example, the same utilitarianism with regard to the natural world may be discerned in Gregory of Nazianzus' advocacy of an ascent spirituality (Or. 45: 8,9). In particular, he treats the material realm as merely allegorical of the spiritual and appears to believe that physical existence is a strictly temporary state of affairs.

More serious is the eastern accommodation to Neoplatonism. While it is true that in their trinitarian theology the Cappadocians rejected the Neoplatonic consensus

of their contemporaries, it is equally true that they failed to carry through the implications of this rejection for other aspects of their theology (Jenson 1969, 122). Neoplatonism still permeates their view of time (Callahan 1958, 49); it appears in Gregory of Nyssa's use of Neoplatonic psychology⁶ (Cat. Or.); and, it is clear in Gregory of Nazianzus' advocacy of the inner way (Or. 28)⁷. Thus Neoplatonic philosophy remained a continuing threat to eastern as to western theology.

The effect of this incomplete rejection of Neoplatonism was a sharpening of the ousia--energeia distinction in the work of subsequent eastern Fathers. This culminated in the theological system of St Gregory Palamas. With the sharpening of this distinction, the relationship between God and the world had once again been rendered problematic (Williams 1977).

In spite of these criticisms, the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians remains an important alternative to that of Augustinianism. The question remains whether this alternative, when its insights are applied systematically to the doctrine of creation, is capable of providing the basis for a positive theology of nature.

(b) The Cappadocian Trinity Today

However, it is by no means straightforward to adapt the Cappadocian analysis of the Trinity for use today. The differences between the Hellenistic context of the Cappadocians and our own post-Enlightenment context are so

great as to create a major problem of theological hermeneutics. One attempt at reinterpreting the Cappadocian theology for the twentieth century is that of the American theologian Robert Jenson. His interpretation has the advantage that it remains firmly rooted within the western theological tradition, drawing heavily on Karl Barth for its inspiration. Of particular interest in the present context is his awareness of the correlation between the doctrines of the Trinity and of creation. Indeed, Jenson has himself offered a brief outline of how a trinitarian doctrine of creation might be developed (Jenson 1982a).

(i) Hypostasis as identity: Jenson follows the Cappadocians in insisting upon the close connection of the hypostases with the divine economy. God reveals himself as the transcendent will which called Israel out of Egypt and creation out of nothing (God the Father). He reveals himself as the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth (God the Son). He reveals himself as that personal power which, coming to the Church, enables us to participate in the future of the Father and the Son (God the Holy Spirit).

However, he goes beyond the Cappadocian view that the hypostases are distinguished only by their relations to affirm the western doctrine that the hypostases are subsistent relations. This move forces him to consider the charge of suppressing the personal distinctions which is often brought against Augustinianism.

In discussing the nature of these relations, he points out that they, like the hypostases, are grounded in the

divine economy. Specifically, the Persons are distinguished by Jesus' relation of filial obedience to the Creator of Israel, and the mission of the Spirit in response to Father and Son. In other words, the interpersonal relations correspond to the temporal structures of salvation history (Jenson 1982b, 106). Now this could have been said by a modalist. However, Jenson insists that these particular relations are constitutive of the divine life: as God works, so he is.

Jenson summarises his development of the Cappadocian concept of hypostasis by proposing to translate it as identity. This concept, so familiar in modern thought, offers three denotations relevant to trinitarian discourse.

First, it denotes a proper name, or identifying description. Applied to the Persons, this implies that there are three ways of uniquely identifying the one God. Again, this could be said by a modalist. In order to avoid the modalist interpretation, it is necessary to insist that the Christian God is never identified by any one of these names but only by all three in conjunction: the proper name of God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Secondly, identity denotes that which endures in an entity. It is the element of continuity: that which enables us to speak of several temporally distinct entities as one and the same. The Hellenistic response to the problem of change and endurance is well-known. Indeed it pervades western thought. Continuity is assured in this world of change by affirming the existence of a timeless substratum

of reality: substance. Cappadocian trinitarianism offers a radical alternative. According to Jenson, they affirmed endurance by maintaining that three temporally distinct entities are, in fact, one and the same. Once again, this must be carefully distinguished from the modalist interpretation. Modalism asserts that God is successively Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so that God himself cannot finally be identified with any one of these roles (or even all three in conjunction).

Thirdly, identity denotes the act of positing oneself in and through time. It is this third denotation which most clearly explains Jenson's affirmation of hypostasis as subsistent relation. The particular relations in question are acts of self-definition. Once again, this must be distinguished from modalism. It does not mean that God posits himself three times as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This would suggest that the hypostases are merely roles taken on by a hidden God. On the contrary, God is that which is posited by these three acts of self-definition.

(ii) The triune infinity: Jenson's reinterpretation of hypostasis requires a corresponding reinterpretation of the concept of ousia. Again following the Cappadocians, he rejects the traditional ambivalence of substance. Instead of allowing that there is a sense in which god both is and has substance, Jenson insists that substance is unequivocally a divine predicate.

But what precisely is this divine substance? According to Jenson, it is equivalent to infinitude. We have already

seen that this was an important feature of the Cappadocian understanding of divine substance. Predicating infinitude of God implies that there can be no exhaustive definition of God: God is incomprehensible. It also implies that God is in no way delimitable. God is not limited by time or space: God is eternal (Jenson 1982b, 166) and omnipresent. Nor is God limited by other causes or agents: God is omnipotent.

Jenson is not satisfied with such a negative understanding of divine substance. He presents a positive interpretation of infinitude as inexhaustibility. According to this interpretation God is absolute creativity, unbounded future possibility. God, thus understood, is actively engaged in overcoming all creaturely resistance to change. Like the God of the Cappadocians, Jenson's God is the very antithesis of Hellenistic concepts of deity. And a corresponding metaphysics will likewise be the very antithesis of Hellenistic metaphysics.

However, if God were understood only in such terms he would be indistinguishable from a creative demon. Without a specific characterisation, encounter with this god could evoke only an existential horror vacui. Jenson makes this point as the basis for developing a trinitarian characterisation of temporal infinitude.

That the life-giving Spirit, the one who confronts the present with the power of the eschaton, is God implies that the eschaton (temporal infinity) is the unbounded fulfilment of all things. It is the ultimate and inexhaustible interrelating of all events, including God. Alternatively,

it is the complete relating of all events to the history of Jesus (Jenson 1982b, 177). In other words, it points to the eschatological participation of all events in the life of God⁸.

That Jesus is God also serves to impose a particular character upon temporal infinity. It implies that the eschaton must be characterised by the love which has been enacted in the history of Jesus. Finally, that the Father is God indicates that the eschaton must be thought of in personal terms.

(iii) Towards an ontology of communion: Jenson's analysis of temporal infinity in terms of inexhaustibility of interrelations, love, and personhood has important implications for the development of a Christian ontology. At the outset, it implies that enduring realities need not be substances. This contrasts with the major Hellenistic traditions which have informed western thought. For any intellectual system with a cyclic view of time (or even a simple linear view), being entails persistence of the past. This is assured by equating being with substance.

Jenson's interpretation of the Cappadocians offers an alternative way of understanding being. He asserts that being entails structural openness to the future. Endurance is not an inherent characteristic of being, understood in this way. On the contrary, the endurance of any entity is dependent upon the identity of the future. In other words, it is determined by the character of the eschaton.

Jenson, for the purposes of creating the basis of a

trinitarian ontology, defines future (or eschaton) as the inexhaustible act of interpreting all prior events in the light of the love of Jesus Christ. The future is divine activity. Flowing from this is his definition of time as "a reaching back in anticipation" (Jenson 1982b, 177). Finally, it allows him to offer a definition of being as interpretative relatedness across time (Jenson 1982b, 182).

(iv) Comments and criticisms: A central point of Jenson's trinitarianism is that the triune God's sovereignty with respect to temporality should not be regarded as one of antithesis. God is not sovereign over time because he himself is timeless: the very negation of life. On the contrary, his sovereignty is one of fullness and fulfilment. God is sovereign over temporal existence because he makes it possible, frees it from mere persistence, and brings it to its ultimate fulfilment. Borrowing terms from Barth's doctrine of providence: praecurrit, concurrit, succurrit.

However, Jenson develops his account of the inner-trinitarian relations in a highly symmetrical fashion. When combined with his insistence on the temporal distinction of the hypostases in relation to the divine economy and the fact that their constitutive relations are rooted in salvation history, the effect is to suggest a time-symmetric Trinity. Symmetry of relations suggests symmetry of causation. If this is the case, then his Trinity is as static as the timeless deity of Hellenism and Christian Platonism. Divine temporality entails asymmetry of causal relations. Thus, against Jenson, I would argue for the

retention of the Cappadocian priority of the Father. The Father is fons trinitatis.

Jenson fears that such a priority must inevitably lead to the affirmation of the persistence of the past. The orientation towards the past of Barth's theology is cited as a case in point. However, while recognising that this is a danger whenever the Holy Spirit is neglected in trinitarian discourse, it is not obvious that the priority of the Father must lead to the neglect of the Spirit. On the contrary, it is arguable that the priority of the Father actually prevents a doctrine of the Trinity from subordinating the Spirit to the Son by prohibiting the filioque clause. That Jenson himself is not entirely free from this danger is clear from the following summary of the innertrinitarian relationships: "God is the Father as the source of the Son's and the Spirit's Godhead; God is the Son as the recipient of the Father's Godhead; and God is the Spirit as the spirit of the Son's possession of the Father's Godhead" (Jenson 1982b, 106).

A second point about which I am unhappy is Jenson's identification of the Cappadocian concept of hypostasis with the modern concept of personal identity. This appears to be a direct consequence of his acceptance of the Augustinian argument that because the hypostases are distinguished only by their mutual relations, they are constituted by those relations and, hence, are those relations. As we saw above, personal identity may be regarded as a particular form of relationship: one which is self-definitive. However, while

identity is more stable than role, there is a clear continuity between the two. Furthermore, coming as it does from an intellectual context dominated by psychoanalysis, it lacks ontological content: it is a purely psychological term. Thus, without an explicit redefinition, it cannot function as an adequate substitute for hypostasis. As it stands, its use for hypostasis easily creates a modalistic impression.

Thirdly, it has been pointed out that Jenson's theology tends towards immanentism (Gunton 1988). This tendency is visible in his view that the Cappadocians proclaimed a God whose deity is inseparable from the historical Jesus (Jenson 1982b, 87). There is a sense in which God is not separable from the history he has created. However, the sense must be stated with some care if it is not to suggest that God and creation are bound together in a way that places unacceptable limits on the freedom of both. Since Jenson does not expand on his comment, one is left with the impression that God and the creature have become enmeshed: there is insufficient 'space' for the establishment of a genuine personal relationship⁹.

In order to avoid this inference, we might add to Jenson's statement that the inseparability of God and his creation is a voluntary and personal one. It is the inseparability of the free self-commitment of the one to the other.

2. CREATION AND THE TRIUNE GOD

(a) The nature of creation

As we saw in chapter 5, two major features characterise the biblical teaching on creation: God created from nothing and did so by means of a divine speech act.

The first of these characteristics is, on its own, ambiguous. Does it express the conviction that the triune God is the exclusive cause of created being? Or does it speak of an ontological nihil: the material cause from which God manufactured creation? The latter interpretation has been a recurrent theme in western theology. Amongst the theologians studied in the preceding chapters it appears most clearly in the work of Paul Tillich. More recently it has found a place in Moltmann's doctrine of creation.

In his expression of this interpretation, Moltmann draws on the Platonising Kabbalistic doctrine of zimzum. The creation of Nothingness is a preparatory work of deity brought about by "a withdrawal by God into himself" (Moltmann 1985, 86). Thus, in Moltmann's view, creation is the corollary of a primordial divine self-negation. The divine creativity is to be understood in terms of negation, emptying, humiliation. This is in keeping with his presentation of Christ's redemptive work and recalls Luther's tendency to understand love as self-hatred. It patently does not cohere with the entirely positive note struck by the biblical accounts of creation or with the trinitarian vision articulated by the Cappadocians and

interpreted by Jenson.

The second major characteristic of creation, its status as a divine speech act, may be regarded as functioning as a qualification eliminating the ambiguity of the ex nihilo. In the beginning, God spoke. Creation is a positive act of divine expression: it is rooted entirely in God. Creation owes nothing to any alien nihil standing in opposition to God. Furthermore, it is positively rooted in God: the expression of creation does not flow from a divine self-negation.

Negatively, creation as divine speech act rules out a variety of speculative theories about the world's origins. Specifically, it contradicts the ever popular metaphors of diffusion and overflow¹⁰ (Dorner 1882, 10). However, apart from the difficulties of reconciling such pantheistic metaphors with orthodox Christian doctrine, they render creation impersonal. Creation is no longer a personal act but an uncontrolled and arbitrary event. If creation is the impersonal overflow of divine substance then God cannot be in control of himself let alone be sovereign over that overflow. If so, the world is essentially alienated deity and redemption must be reinterpreted as the quest for victory over this alienation which is creatureliness. Pantheism and gnostic hatred of matter are two sides of the same coin, and both are contradicted by the entirely personal Christian characterisation of creation as a speech act.

Positively, this presentation of creation as a speech

act underlines Hebrew and Christian faith in the sovereignty of God. Thus it also rules out any doctrine of creation which would present it primarily in terms of divine self-fulfilment (Dorner 1882, 10). Furthermore, a speech act is essentially rational. Thus creation should not be thought of as in any way capricious. Finally, it implies that creation is divine expression: thus any Christian doctrine of creation entails the prior development of an appropriate understanding of God.

(b) Creation as triune act

(i) A Christian characterisation of creation: It follows that a distinctively Christian doctrine of creation may not be developed independently of a doctrine of the Trinity. If creation is a personal, sovereign and rational act of the God who has revealed himself in Christ Jesus, it is an act of the triune God. However, western developments of trinitarianism which divorce the triunity from the divine economy have led to understandings of creation in which the nonhuman is ignored and devalued.

The more dynamic trinitarianism outlined above may enable the development of a more positive assessment of the nonhuman. The form such a development might take will depend on the proposed relationship between the divine Persons and the divine Being. According to the Cappadocians, the Persons are primary and divine Being is a function of their inexhaustible life in relationship with one another. Thus creation, understood as a personal act,

must be an act of the divine Persons rather than of the Being. The Father creates, the Son creates, and the Spirit creates: and this does not mean merely that the one God creates in a way that may be understood under three purely symbolic headings. There are three personal agents of the act of creation.

On the other hand, the inseparability of the three Persons precludes any understanding of creation which would ascribe it exclusively to one of the Persons (contra Moltmann 1981, 112). Thus, Gregory of Nyssa could say that,

We do not learn that the Father does something on his own, in which the Son does not co-operate. Or again, that the Son acts on his own without the Spirit. Rather does every operation which extends from God to creation and is designated according to our differing conceptions of it have its origin in the Father, proceed through the Son, and reach its completion by the Holy Spirit. (Abl., 261f.)

Or again, dealing specifically with the notion of God's providential activity,

the principle of the overseeing and beholding power is a unity in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It issues from the Father, as from a spring. It is actualised by the Son; and its grace is perfected by the power of the Holy Spirit. No activity is distinguished among the Persons, as if it were brought to completion individually by each of them or separately apart from their joint supervision. Rather all is providence, care and direction of everything, whether in the sensible creation or of heavenly nature, one and not three. (Abl., 263)

Clearly the Cappadocian understanding of the Trinity also precluded a doctrine of creation which failed to distinguish the different roles of the three Persons in the one act of creation. Such failure would, of course, betray an indifference towards the inner-trinitarian distinctions.

In summary, we may say that the work of creation is a single divine act which is the joint work of three agents whose roles in the one work are distinguished in a manner analogous to and deriving from the inner-trinitarian distinctions of the Persons.

(ii) Conceptual difficulties with triune activity: The notion of triune activity, like the doctrine of the Trinity, raises a number of conceptual difficulties for the western mind.

First, there is the problem of triune agency as such. In what sense can one speak of three agents for a single act? This problem has been effectively suppressed by western doctrines of the Trinity which tend to be monistic. However, it is implicit in criticisms of the social analogy which represent it as inherently tritheistic. Our understanding of agency and individuality is such that we tend to see a multiplicity of agents as a multiplicity of individuals: three divine agents implies three gods.

This difficulty is essentially the same as the problem of double agency: how is it possible to speak coherently of more than one agent as being responsible for a particular act? Specifically, how can God and a human individual be held responsible for a specific act without a profound violation of human freedom?

The latter problem is closely connected with the modern understanding of freedom. One effect of the change in the historical consciousness of western society which accompanied the Enlightenment¹¹ was a transformation in the

concept of freedom (Gilkey 1976, 193). Traditionally Christian theology understood human freedom in terms of vocation: freedom lay in responding to God's will for you. In western society this has given way to an understanding of freedom as autonomy. Human beings have come to be seen as creators of themselves and their world¹². As a correlative of this new view of freedom western Christian theology has come to be dominated by both deism and pantheism (Tanner 1988, 164f.).

This Pelagian understanding of human freedom is simply incommensurable with the concept of double agency. Thus theologians must expound with some care the sense in which they can speak of double agency in order to demonstrate that such discourse is coherent in the context of Christian theology¹³. Barth's defence of concurrence (CD III/3, 90-154) is an illuminating example of such an exposition. The divine act of accompanying creation, both as a whole and in its multitude of individual events, rules out every deistic interpretation of transcendence. God is present in every event, preserving its participants, making possible their activity, and guiding that activity towards the eschaton¹⁴. Concurrence implies the immanence of God in creation. However, in doing so, it avoids any pantheistic identification of divine and creaturely actions.

Similarly, the coherence of triune activity can only be demonstrated by the careful exposition of the concept of perichoresis.

Another problem is that of the sense in which creation

may be said to be a single act. After all, creation clearly consists of an uncountable multitude of events and the biblical witness makes it clear that creation was not instantaneous.

One way of understanding this would be to invoke some such concept as that of Gordon Kaufman's master act (Mason 1982, 391). He explains this by reference to the career of a medical student. That career consists of many events which, to an outsider might seem quite disconnected. However, to the student herself all these events are coordinated into a single act, e.g., the act of becoming a brain surgeon. The point of his parable is twofold: (a) like human purposes, providential activity is not unambiguously visible in particular segments of history, and (b) a final purpose and the methods chosen for achieving it are known only to the purposer (unless he or she chooses to reveal them to another).

Since Kaufman rules out divine intervention, his view of divine activity is entirely dependent on this analogy. God's creative activity taken as a whole is a complex master act of purposing and achieving those purposes. Thus the myriads of events which make up created reality are coordinated into a unity by this master act.

However, this approach may be interpreted as offering a static Parmenidean understanding of the universe (Mason 1982, 416). An atemporal deity eternally wills one thing: creation as a whole. The manifold character of that creation is merely a result of the projection of the one

onto time¹⁵.

It also encourages a tendency to minimise any reference to distinct acts of God. The emphasis is all on the master act of coordinating the events of creation while the fact that the component acts must themselves be, in some sense, acts of God is overlooked. In other words, the concept of a master act is flexible (or vague) enough to be used in conjunction with a Tillichian (or, even, Whiteheadian) view of God in which the deity does nothing in particular.

Nevertheless, Kaufman is right in pointing out that created events are coordinated by their ordering to the divine purpose (or purposes). A collection of completely uncoordinated events would not be creation but chaos. However, there are forms of coordination which do not cohere with the Christian concept of God.

How events are coordinated is critical. The biblical accounts of creation (with their stress on the "In the beginning" and their narration of a creation history) clearly point to their coordination with reference to a particular point in time.

Commonsense suggests that this point is none other than the beginning itself. All events are coordinated from the beginning: their relationships to one another are defined by their relationship to the primordial event. All world lines intersect in a common origin. Given the initial conditions of such a cosmos an omniscient observer could deduce the trajectories of all world lines; could calculate the subsequent history of the universe. This is the static

deterministic cosmos of LaPlace and of the hyper-Calvinists.

However, such a commonsense approach to the unity of creation is contradicted by the dynamic trinitarian concept of God with which we have been working.

(iii) The creative speech act as trinitarian: The creative speech act is presented as voluntary and personal (Lossky 1957, 94f.). This characterisation of creation immediately indicates a concept of God which is not simply monotheistic (Jenson 1973, 132). If God were absolutely one there would be no reason to conceive of creation as personal. Creation as a personal act means that, whatever else it is, creation involves a decision to be related to others, to what is created (Jenson 1969, 168; Young 1976, 151). It would be inconceivable for a divine monad to make such a decision. The decision to be related entails the possibility within the godhead for such relatedness. Thus the Christian doctrine of creation carries within itself the seeds of the doctrine of the Trinity and vice versa.

Recognising that creation is properly an act of the Trinity as a whole, Jenson has proposed the following scheme of appropriations:

Insofar as "the world is created" is equivalent to "the world has been commanded (to be)," creation is the work of the Father. Insofar as "the world is created" is equivalent to "the world now is (by God's command)," creation is the work of the Son. Insofar as "the world is created" is equivalent to "the world is (commanded now) to be for God's purpose," creation is the work of the Spirit. But these are one work; that they happen is one event. (Jenson 1982a, 41)

He has analysed the one act of creation into origination, sustenance, and consummation and appropriated

these activities to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively. There is a clear precedent for this in Eastern Orthodoxy, as witness the following statement derived from St Basil by Vladimir Lossky:

The work of creation is common to the whole Trinity, but each of the three persons is the cause of created being in a way which is different though in each case united to the others. . . . 'In the creation, . . . consider first the primordial cause . . . of all that has been made -- this is the Father; then the operating cause . . . which is the Son; and the perfecting cause . . . the Holy Spirit: so that it is by the will of the Father that the heavenly spirits are, by the operation of the Son that they come into existence, and by the presence of the Spirit that they are made perfect.' It is this common action of the Trinity, manifested thus in the double economy of the effecting Word and of the perfecting Spirit, that confers upon all creatures not simply being, but also 'good being' . . . the faculty of being according to the good, to perfection. (Lossky 1957, 100f.)

In both cases the historical character of God's creative activity is brought out by referring the different aspects of that activity to the three 'dimensions' of creaturely temporality. Thus origination refers to the absolute past of created being; sustenance refers to the actual course of created history; and consummation refers to the absolute future of creation. The particular appropriations made by both Jenson and St Basil are amply justified by an analysis of the relationships within the innertrinitarian life.

We have already seen that the creative speech act may be characterised as a divine promise. Now, if, following Jenson's lead, we inquire into the roles of the Persons of the Trinity in relation to this promise we come to the following formulation:

The Father is the source of the promise, the one who makes the primordial commitment to the creature, the Creator of heaven and earth. The Son is the mediator of the promise, the one who, before time and in time, enables the promise to be fulfilled, the one through whom all things were created. The Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of the promise, the one for whom the Son makes straight a path, the Lord and giver of life.

But what is the relationship between this trinitarian account of the creative speech act and the doctrine of divine providence? God's personal and gracious care for his creatures is clearly the activity which properly flows from the promise. It is the activity by which the triune God fulfils the primordial promise to creation.

Providence clearly presupposes creation: in Barth's terminology it is the external basis of the covenant. Conversely, creation understood in terms of the divine promise, presupposes providence: providential activity is a corollary of the divine self-commitment implicit in the act of creation.

Recognition of the very close relationship between creation and providence is often taken as the cue for the dissolution of creation in providence. This is particularly true of those theological systems which focus exclusively on the present (e.g., Schleiermacher, Aulén). However, as Weber has pointed out, such systems have the effect of coercing God into the present. Or, more precisely, the God with which they deal is not the living God who is sovereign

over past, present, and future, but a mere concept. Furthermore such a conception of God and his creative activity entails an ontological coordination between God and creation (Weber 1981, 504f.) which must issue in a form of pantheism.

(c) The promise of the Father

The divine fiat, the primordial expression of the promise, constitutes the background for any theological discussion of created being, human as well as nonhuman.

A promise is a commitment of oneself to a course of action intended to achieve some end on behalf of an other or others. Casting creation in these terms, it is first and foremost God's gracious giving of himself to his creation: it is a divine self-commitment (Thunberg 1965, 86). Thus it involves God's acceptance of responsibility for his creation. As we have already pointed out, this provides a basis for a doctrine of God's providential care for his creation.

It entails the positing of structures to which God may appropriately commit himself. Again, characterising creation as promise rather than command suggests that these structures are better thought of as open-ended: an incomplete, contingent order which offers a framework for cosmic evolution. Indeed, since there is no preceding structure to be overcome, it suggests an entirely contentless initial state: the mere possibility of subsequent finite ordering.

The Father's promise is a divine commitment to this void: a commitment to the maintenance and fulfilment of its structures, and to the evocation of ever more complex sub-structures within it. This personal giving of himself to creation entails a commitment to guide the evolution of its structures so as to enable its appropriate response.

(d) Implications for the kingdom of nature

What are the implications of this understanding of creation for our understanding of the nonhuman?

If creation is a divine promise, then to be is to be one to which or to whom God has promised himself. This implies that every existent is, by virtue of its creaturehood, an object of divine love. Further, it follows from this that humankind and the nonhuman creation in which we are embedded are interesting for their own sakes (Jüngel 1983, 34). Thus, contrary to the intuitions of Augustinian Christianity, the nonhuman creation is worthy of our respect and interest.

If creaturely being entails divine self-commitment, it follows that to be is to be related to the triune God. The doctrine of the Trinity and of creation, taken together, point to the necessity of a relational ontology. As is the case of God's own being, creaturely being is rooted in relationships and processes rather than in things or individual events.

Some theologians and philosophers who would agree thus far have been tempted to insist that personal relationships

are the basis of all being. Thus some forms of process thought have opted for a panpsychism in which something akin to personhood is predicated of all existents. At the other extreme, personalistic forms of idealism tend to make non-human existents dependent on the human subject.

While these are extreme views, the personal relationships within the Trinity do constitute the paradigm for all creaturely relationships. This is clear in the way in which God chooses to reveal himself to his creation. The person of Jesus Christ is the final point of contact between God and the world (Meyendorff 1983, 36). In the hypostatic union, Creator and creature become one and indivisible without any loss of their distinctive natures, without any confusion. There is an absolute difference but no distance.

Such a relational ontology gives rise to two very important affirmations about creation both human and non-human. It guarantees the autonomous reality of creatures by protecting the otherness of the creature. A personal relationship as the basis of creaturely being precludes the possibility of a pantheistic dissolution of God in creation or the creature in God. Closely related to this (Thunberg 1965, 69) is the fact that it guarantees the freedom of the creature and the contingency of creation as a whole (Zizioulas 1985, 39). This implies that creation as a whole is radically historical: history is not just a function of human culture. Contingency also reminds us that the initial creation was an act of absolute novelty (Young 1976, 149). Creation is essentially dynamic.

3. THE KINGDOM OF NATURE AND THE TRIUNE GOD

(a) Sustenance as triune activity

Given the above account of creation, we may regard the divine sustenance as appropriately the work of the Son (while rejecting any suggestion that it might be exclusive to the second Person of the Trinity).

(i) The meaning of sustenance: The content of the doctrine is the affirmation that the God who has once acted to create a finite contingent order remains faithful to that order and the individuals therein. God maintains created being in and through time: sustenance is the continuation of creation. Negatively, it is the maintenance of creation against the threat of dissolution into non-existence. Positively, it is maintenance towards a specific end: there is a dynamic, developmental (even, progressive) element within the doctrine.

This latter aspect is sometimes emphasised by use of the term creatio continua. The dangers presented by the implicit dissolution of creation in providence have already been highlighted. However, it also tempts us to regard preservation as continuous origination¹⁶. Thus,

the duration of a thing which has remained almost unchanged through years or centuries, or millions of years, is . . . not a static being which exists in itself, but a continuous series of successive acts of preservation, by which from moment to moment it is decided afresh that this thing shall retain this particular form.

Thus all maintenance is a continuous re-creation.
(Heim 1935, 182)

Implicit in this is a denial of creaturely persistence. Temporal succession is mere illusion: an artefact of the succession of acts of creation. By thus undermining the status of time in the created order, the doctrine of re-creation effectively denies the central content of the doctrine of preservation or sustenance. It also undermines the freedom of created being¹⁷. Created activity is of necessity temporal. If temporality is an illusion and the reality is a series of divinely ordained static moments of creation, there can be no genuine activity on the part of the creature but only the illusion thereof. And without the reality of creaturely activity it is futile to speak of creaturely freedom.

In order to maintain the dynamic dimension of the doctrine while avoiding the dangers implicit in creatio continua, I shall use the term sustenance (Berkouwer 1952, 50-82). It also avoids the negative connotations of preservation and conservation¹⁸. This organic metaphor maintains the dynamic nature of conservation without suggesting that the end in view is external to the object of sustenance. It speaks of the nourishing and bringing to maturity of creation. It also reminds us that God's creative activity subsequent to the act of origination is a creation on the basis of and in organic continuity with what has already been created¹⁹.

(ii) Sustenance is trinitarian: A Christocentric account of this doctrine would certainly be in accord with the New Testament. However, we must bear in mind the opera

ad extra principle and the limitations it places upon appropriation. Sustenance, like any divine activity, is an activity of the whole Trinity. It would be tempting to continue the process of analysis further by subdividing sustenance into past, present, and future aspects. However, we are saved from the prospect of an infinite regress by the lack of biblical or other precedents for the continuation of the analysis beyond this point.

(b) The sustaining power of the Son

How are we to understand this activity of the Son in such a way as to allow roles for the Father and the Spirit? One way would be to reflect upon the relationship between sustenance and the other aspects of God's creative activity. Returning to my original definition, sustenance is the maintenance of what has been originated by God with a view to its ultimate consummation. Sustenance is the historical activity of reconciling the original creation with the new heavens and new earth of the eschaton. Precisely because it is the reconciliation of origin and eschaton it has to be understood in terms of those activities.

Viewed in this way, Christ is the one who shapes creaturely existence (Hardy & Ford 1984, 119). He it is who preserves what has been originated, maintaining it against the threat of dissolution, the chaos of universal thermal equilibrium. However, as has been suggested by my use of the term sustenance, there is a positive aspect to this creative work of Christ. His shaping of existence is no

mere preservation of past structures. On the contrary, an essential dimension of sustenance is the evocation of new dimensions, new levels, of order and complexity.

(c) Origination and sustenance

Sustenance is the maintenance or continuation of original creation. Therefore it must be understood in the light of that act of origination. Creation is an act of loving communication based upon a divine decision: "To be is to be addressed" by the Father (Jenson 1973, 134). The doctrine of divine sustenance teaches that this address did not occur once and for all. It does not permit the deistic notion of creaturely persistence as merely the immanent unfolding of a past divine act. On the contrary the Father continues to address his creation.

The content of that address is the history of Jesus. The Son is the Word of God addressed to all creatures and not merely humanity. Thus it is that, through Jesus the Son, "all things hold together." This implies a striking affirmation of the biophysical universe. God addresses his creatures by entering into creation (Jüngel, 1976, 2f.; Steck 1980, 267). Creation itself and not some transcendent realm of ideas is the divinely appointed locus for the encounter between God and the creature.

Also implicit in this view of sustenance is a denial of contemporary secular eschatologies based on the indefinite extrapolation of our present understanding of the physical universe. Current cosmological models suggest that, left to

itself, the universe would eventually relax to a state of statistical equilibrium. In this state, the physical universe will have achieved maximum entropy and stability. It will have degenerated to the "waste and void" of Gn. 1:2. Ironically, this final state is, mathematically speaking, simpler and more orderly than the present living disorder.

In denying this, the doctrine of divine sustenance denies the universal applicability of the second law of thermodynamics. This negative aspect of divine sustenance might be summarised as resistance to that entropy and order which signifies death.

(d) Sustenance and fulfilment

Many of the cosmological models which most clearly portray the end of the universe as a state of universal thermal equilibrium also satisfy a topological condition known as Strong Cosmic Censorship; a condition which approximates to Laplacean determinism. This suggests that the doctrine of divine sustenance constitutes an affirmation of genuine creaturely freedom and implies divine resistance to any tendency for the universe to degenerate into a deterministic state. It also justifies Pannenberg's insistence that Christ's work in relation to creation should be seen as reconciliation rather than determination (Pannenberg 1968, 395). Christ shapes creaturely existence but not as an archetype. Thus creation is free to be a unique contingent and historical reality; it is not a necessary or deterministic imago Christi.

What of the eschatological aspect: the cooperation between the Son and the Holy Spirit in the activity of sustaining created being? Without this, sustenance would degenerate into preservation; the history of creation would become a mere maintenance of the status quo laid down in the act of origination. It is the eschatological call of the Holy Spirit that distinguishes creation from the static harmony of the Hellenistic cosmos. He is the perfecting cause of creation; the agent of its consummation.

One aspect of sustenance is the movement towards this consummation. The pneumatological aspect is to be found in the liberation of the creature from bondage to history; from the persistence of the past. "To be, says the gospel, is not to persist; it is rather to be surprised, to be called out of what I have and might persist in, to what I do not have" (Jenson 1973, 138). This is basic to Jenson's anthropology, but, in the present context, it may be extended to cover the novelty which is observed to be a real part of creation history. To the extent that sustenance is the maintenance of a history that is progressing in this way, it is an activity of the Holy Spirit. It follows that the Spirit's activity of consummation is not merely trans-historical. On the contrary, moments of partial consummation (steps towards the eschaton) are to be found in creation history.

Looked at in this light, the incarnation is a prefiguring of the telos of creation. The historical localised embodiment of God in creation (Dorner 1882, 18) points towards the eschatological universal embodiment of

God (Moltmann 1985, 244). In other words, the hypostatic union of God and creature in Jesus of Nazareth both prefigures and evokes an eschatological hypostatic union between the triune God and creation (Meyendorff 1983, 36).

God is thus the ground of novelty: continually evoking new structures in a manner which 'diverges' towards the eschaton²⁰. Ultimately such a God is not limited by the limitations of his creation at any historical epoch. On the contrary, the God who revealed himself in the histories of Israel and of Jesus has revealed himself to be essentially one who is able to create new possibilities in every situation.

4. THE TELOS OF THE KINGDOM

(a) The Holy Spirit and the fulfilment of creation

We come now to the cosmic implications of Pentecost. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Church implies his indwelling in creation. But how are we to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in creation?

According to the Nicene Creed, the most fundamental title of the Holy Spirit, the role which determines all his other roles, is zoopoion: the Giver of life. For twentieth century thought this title conveys an irreducible mystery since life, in spite of the importance of the concept, has never been adequately defined (Lovelock 1988, 16-18).

Although many Christians have understood this role of

life giver in purely soteriological terms, the New Testament itself is not so restrictive. For example, Paul clearly relates life-giving spirit to the breath of life (1 Cor. 15:45). In so doing, he makes a clear connection between spirit as the new existence in humankind and the Hebrew (and Greek) conception of spirit as the universal source of life. While, in Genesis 1, the gift of life is presented as the adornment of the orders of creation. Both presentations point to the responsiveness of creation towards the creator. Thus the gift of life is intimately related to the telos of creation.

The role of the Holy Spirit has been strongly affirmed within the eastern Orthodox traditions (primarily as a way of affirming the deity of the Holy Spirit). However, western theology has tended to relegate the Spirit to the role of divine assistant in the sanctification of individual human beings²¹. As a corrective to this tendency any contemporary doctrine of creation must explicitly discuss the role of the Holy Spirit.

Reference to the creative work of the Spirit has already been made in the preceding sections because of the opera ad extra principle. The Holy Spirit, like the Father and the Son, is intimately involved in every aspect of God's creative activity. However, the trinitarian scheme presented above suggests that the aspect of creation most appropriate to the Spirit is the eschatological horizon: the consummation of creation.

The key to an understanding of the consummation of

creation lies in the Creed's insistence that the Holy Spirit is the one who gives life to creation. Consummation is the vivification of creation. This ought to rule out any suggestion that Christianity envisages a nonmaterial, trans-historical eschaton. It is, of course, true that just such a view has dominated much of the history of Christian theology. A purely spiritual eschaton is the corollary of an intellectualistic understanding of spirit. When spirit is equated with mind, life is seen solely in terms of (conscious) mental processes and the nonrational becomes the nonliving as in Cartesian thought.

The writings of Teilhard de Chardin offer us a vision of the eschatological vivification of the cosmos. However, from the perspective of a doctrine of the nonhuman creation, it is a flawed vision. He makes the Augustinian assumption that life and spirit are to be understood entirely in terms of human consciousness. Thus he defines the end of the world as

The wholesale internal introversion upon itself of the noosphere, which has simultaneously reached the uttermost limits of its complexity and its centrality. . . . the overthrow of equilibrium, detaching the mind, fulfilled at last, from its material matrix, so that it will henceforth rest with all its weight in God-Omega (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, 315f.)

His language may be novel but his eschatology is clearly continuous with the purely spiritual eschatologies of so much western theology²².

What understanding of consummation do we arrive at if we revert to a Hebrew view of life? In Hebrew thought, the chief characteristic of life is activity: it is, thus, far

broader than the intellectualistic approach. For example, the activity of running water is sufficient to warrant the description 'living' (Gn. 26:19). The vivification of the cosmos is also its activation: its transformation from passivity and inertia to responsiveness.

This is not to be understood in terms of a simple linear progression. Since its origin, the cosmos has harboured elements of both passivity and activity. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate (or final) source of all created activity and life (understood as that which tends towards the eschatological activity of the cosmos).

There is a clear connection between the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the giver of life and the doctrine of the Son of God as the one who reconciles the cosmos to himself. We have already seen how the Christological dimension of creation may be developed in terms of resistance to entropy (i.e., static equilibrium) and evocation of novelty (which implies ever increasing complexity). The creative activity of the Holy Spirit may be seen in precisely parallel terms. Just as in traditional soteriology, the Son reconciles and the Spirit redeems. The work of the Holy Spirit is the necessary consequence of the Son's reconciliation of all things to himself. With the Son, the Spirit is the agent of novelty. Specifically, he is the beautifier of creation (Edwards 1971, 108ff) and the agent of fulfilment.

(b) The Sabbath of Creation

On the face of it, the above comments on the eschaton as the vivification of the cosmos stand in clear contradiction to that most fundamental biblical symbol of the eschaton: the Sabbath rest.

Moltmann has done much to develop the doctrine of the Sabbath in the context of an ecological doctrine of creation. Specifically he presents the Sabbath as a time which has been sanctified so that it might symbolise the completion of creation. "It is a completion through rest. Out of God's rest spring the blessing and sanctification of the seventh day" (Moltmann 1985, 278). It symbolises God's confrontation of his creation and its corollary, creation's coexistence with God. Furthermore, if the divine rest is to be taken seriously, the Sabbath of creation is also indicative of God's immanence in creation (Moltmann 1985, 280). Thus the consummation of creation is to be understood as "the completion given through the reposeful presence of the Creator in what he has created" (Moltmann 1985, 287).

Moltmann claims that rest is the fulfilment of activity, being is the completion of doing. However, in the process he has succeeded in presenting rest as opposed to activity. The general impression that one is left with is that rest fulfils activity by being its negation (just as in much classical thought eternity is the fulfilment of time by virtue of being its negation).

(i) The Sabbath and fulfilment: In order to avoid this impression it would perhaps be preferable to present rest as

fulfilled activity rather than the fulfilment of activity. Alternatively, rest is ultimate activity and is thus to be distinguished from virtually all creaturely activity which is penultimate and preparatory.

Activity and rest are not direct opposites. The Sabbath rest is an active rest typified by the Temple worship. Other biblical metaphors for the eschaton also bring out this emphasis on an active rest. Amongst these the most notable is perhaps the vision of the Kingdom as a place of feasting and enjoyment. The Sabbath rest is the active enjoyment of God and his blessings.

In other words, the rest which characterises the eschaton is not passivity but the active rest in which all creation joins together in the praise of God. It is thus the unbounded fulfilment of the partial jubilation already audible in creation²³. This is the vision behind the final stanza of the Philippian hymn (Phil. 2:9-11): and this again reminds us of the essential Christological dimension which is not lost even in the ultimate fulfilment of all things. If the Holy Spirit is the one who empowers this eschatological song of creation, the Son is its theme, and the Father its original composer.

But the Sabbath rest is primarily a divine rest. The ultimate fulfilment of all things is, in a sense, also the divine self-fulfilment. This should not be taken as implying any defect in God which the act of creation seeks to overcome. Rather, it refers to the fulfilment of the divine promise. The eschatological Sabbath is a time when

God is able to give himself fully to creation²⁴ and creation is able to respond fully. It represents the complete participation of creation in the triune life of God (Zizioulas 1985, 50).

Seen in this light the Spirit's eschatological vivification of the cosmos is nothing less than a qualified deification of the cosmos²⁵. Eastern Orthodoxy has traditionally presented the work of the Spirit in humankind as theiosis. It seems appropriate to extend this to the Spirit's work in relation to the nonhuman creation.

(ii) The present and the Sabbath: Much of twentieth century experience would suggest that the present stands in direct contradiction of this vision of the future. However, the Christian vision of the future does not depend on history visibly tending towards the eschaton as a curve towards its asymptote. Eschatology does not imply a doctrine of progress.

It is more appropriate to regard certain moments in history as anticipations of the eschaton. The paradigm would be the history of Jesus (Pannenberg 1968, 392). However, there are such moments in the life of the Church, of society, and of every individual believer.

(c) Implications for the nonhuman Creation

The simplest, most obvious and yet most important implication of all this for the nonhuman creation is that it too will be an integral part of the eschatological spiral of blessing and praise. This conclusion contrasts sharply with

traditional Christian views of the eschaton as purely spiritual and trans-historical. However, it is consonant with the unashamedly materialistic eschatological imagery of the Bible.

We may also recall that the Spirit is the giver of life. All life is the gift of God. Every living creature receives its existence as a divine gift. As we shall see, this may be used to reinterpret the dominium terrae.

Can anything be said about the mode of giving? If it is seen in the light of the divine self-giving, we may rule out certain interventionist models. The gift of life is not merely extrinsic: it is not the superposition of spirit upon a dead mechanism. Dualism and interventionism remain intellectual possibilities but they are not encouraged by the Christian insistence that all life has the character of divine gift.

Neither is life to be dismissed as a mere epiphenomenon of material realities. This position is simply an inversion of the Cartesian view.

Finally the Spirit's role as final cause or agent of eschatological transformation suggests that teleology ought to be rehabilitated as a way of speaking about created realities.

5. HUMANKIND AND THE KINGDOM OF NATURE

(a) God's Image in Creation

A Christian theology of nature must recognise the centrality of humankind to both the biblical understanding of the created order and the contemporary eco-crisis.

The biblical understanding of humankind is often summarised by the doctrine of the imago dei. This metaphor for humanity is important for theologies of nature because, although it occurs rarely in the Bible²⁶, its occurrences correlate with some of the most important passages about the nonhuman creation (e.g., Gen. 1-11; Rom. 8; Col. 1:15-20).

Traditionally, the imago dei has been defined by the negation of the nonhuman. By seeking the divine image in that which distinguishes the human from the nonhuman, theologians have been able to maintain the Hellenistic concept of the essential divinity of human rationality. This approach is not open to a theology of nature because it presupposes that humankind stands over against the nonhuman. It actively encourages the alienation from nature which a theology of nature must question.

The alternative is to attend to the God whose image we are supposed to portray in creation. The imago dei cannot be satisfactorily understood apart from careful theological attention to the triune God and his relationships with the world of humans and nonhumans. In recent years this process has led to important revisions of the concept of personhood in the light of the inner-trinitarian relationships.

However, more could be done with God's self-revelation in creation.

The immanence of the Spirit and the incarnation of the Son suggest that embodiment will be essential to the divine image (Moltmann 1985, 244-75). Furthermore, we must recall that God gives himself to what he has created. And in this self-giving he imparts a genuine, if dependent, existence and a genuine dignity to every creature. This latter point suggests the need for a revision of the consequences of understanding humankind as the divine image.

A positive approach to the imago dei leads to the affirmation that humankind is sufficiently like God for communication to be possible. Human beings are those creatures to whom God can address himself. They are those creatures to whom God comes (as a fellow creature) and in whom he dwells. At the same time, human beings above all creatures can respond in kind to the divine address.

Looked at in this way, the idea of the divine image does not impose any ontological distinction between the human and the nonhuman. Men and women are animals with a unique function. That function is one of representation: they represent God to creation and creation to God.

The dominium terrae is to be understood in the light of this representative function. Thus the gift of the world to humankind is symbolic of the gift of being and life to all creatures.

(i) The contradiction of the image: The Bible juxtaposes the affirmation that humankind is the image of

God with a text in which primordial humankind is faced with the temptation to become as gods. What is presented as a gift and a vocation in Genesis 1 is seized by force in Genesis 3.

The story of the Fall is the story of how the representative creature violates the order of creation. It speaks of the denial of creation's character as a divine gift. With that denial, the dominium terrae takes on a radically different character. Its character as divine vocation gives way to the assertion of human autonomy and absolute lordship over the world. Genesis 4-11 portrays human relationships with God (Babel), with one another (Cain, Lamech), and with the environment in terms of violence.

In this situation human relationships are typically I-it relationships and dominion can only be understood in terms of the power to manipulate in accordance with one's will. A corollary of this is the inevitable alienation of human beings from the objects of their manipulation. The cost of having the world at one's disposal is that sense of thrownness of which Heidegger spoke. Alienation and domination: each gives birth to the other in a vicious circle which circumscribes all aspects of our present existence²⁷.

(ii) The redemption of the image: A prerequisite of a proper relationship between humankind and creation is the redemption of that image which has been so distorted by our age-old efforts at self-deification. Some of the

implications of Christ's redeeming work for this relationship will be examined in the concluding sections.

(b) Concurrence and human agency

As we have already seen, the doctrine of concurrence affirms that God gives creation space and time to be itself. He respects its relative freedom while remaining intimately involved in every creaturely event.

It follows that God respects the relative freedom of his image in creation. The fact that every human act may also be regarded as a divine act²⁸ leads to the problem of double agency when interpreted in terms of post-Enlightenment thought. However, as I suggested earlier, this problem does not arise within the intellectual context of orthodox Christian theology.

This doctrine has important implications for a theological understanding of the relationship between humankind and nature. By respecting the freedom of humankind, God has permitted us the freedom to act in God-like ways towards the rest of his creation.

Once again, we have arrived at the doctrine of the dominium terrae. Concurrence implies that we have the freedom to exercise (divine) lordship over creation. We are God's vice-gerents in the world.

However, that lordship is qualified in a number of ways. First, as we have already noted, creation is a gift of divine love. And God's gift to us symbolises his gift of being to all creatures. As such, it is not simply at human-

kind's disposal. On the contrary, its symbolic character demands that the gift be treated with respect. Furthermore, it also demands an appropriate response to the Giver.

Secondly, we are called to exercise dominion as the image of God. It follows that appropriate human dominion will be modelled upon the divine sovereignty. This is characterised by a love for the creature (who cannot or will not reciprocate) which is manifested in self-sacrificial humble service (Mk. 10:45). It is thus more appropriate to see it in terms of stewardship and priesthood than of absolute monarchy.

Our freedom to act in God-like ways also has implications for human creativity. It is sometimes suggested that only God is genuinely creative. Against this, the implications of concurrence suggest that we are also called to be creators, or sub-creators (Tolkien 1964, 70). This goes beyond literature and art. We have been granted the freedom to create not only to produce creations of the imagination but to influence the physical creation in which we live.

The freedom to act in God-like ways is our warrant for engaging in scientific research and technological innovation. Taking this a step further, science is to be thought of as more than "thinking God's thoughts after him." The freedom I envisage implies that science involves the creative interpretation of nature. Similarly the freedom to pursue technological innovation involves the dangerous freedom and responsibility to alter (and manage) our environment.

(c) Stewardship and sustenance

The relationship between human dominion and divine sovereignty suggests a correlation between the ways in which dominion is expressed and the ways in which God exercises his sovereignty in relation to the world. Thus stewardship may be expounded in terms of sustenance and priesthood in terms of consummation.

Just as sustenance was seen to have negative and positive aspects so too does stewardship.

Negatively, stewardship of creation may be seen as conservation. It involves respect for the integrity of the nonhuman creation and recognition of our interdependence. The vocation to conserve creation justifies the actions of Christians who make common cause with environmentalists and green activists. It requires us to maintain the present diversity of creation against further damage and to repair the damage already done by human activities.

Positively, stewardship implies the encouragement of diversity and novelty in creation. This is its point of departure from secular environmentalism. Contrary to many voices in the Green movement, stewardship of creation recognises a positive place for science and technology. Nature is our responsibility: we are called to manage it.

How does responsible stewardship differ from the post-Enlightenment technocentric approach to the environment (O'Riordan 1981, 11)? As O'Riordan describes it, the latter sees the environment primarily in utilitarian terms. Conservation is understood as resource management. Its

approach to environmental problems is to reaffirm its faith in our capacity to produce technological solutions as and when they become necessary. Thus it implies a doctrine of (technological) progress. It contrasts sharply with the dominant views of the environmental movement (which may be described as ecocentric).

Christian stewardship's recognition of our freedom to engage in scientific research and technological innovation, and our responsibility to manage the environment lays it open to the risk of repudiation by ecocentric environmentalists. However, its motivation is quite different from that of technocentrism. It does not encourage the sustainable exploitation envisaged by technocentric environmentalists. On the contrary, motivated by love for God and concern for our fellow creatures, it seeks to nurture the diversity of the world: through the conservation of the present complex of ecosystems and environments but also through the artistic and technological transformation of our world. In this way human creativity is permitted a small part in the movement of creation towards its eschatological vivification.

If technocentrism is the Enlightenment response to the environment, ecocentrism is the Romantic reaction against that response. The roots of the modern environmental movement are to be found in the English Romantics and particularly the American Transcendentalists. While there are many affinities between ecocentrism and the concept of stewardship, there are also some important differences.

There is a recurring tendency amongst ecocentric environmentalists to divinise nature and to seek to appease the resultant deity by sacrificing on its altar much of the technological achievement of the human race. Stewardship refuses to recognise such a god and refuses to turn its back on technology.

In effect, stewardship summarises a third approach to the environment which is quite distinct from the secular options. This is a theocentric environmentalism which neither exalts nature to status of deity nor debases it to the level of human resource. It is not motivated by self-interest (neither the technocentric management of resources nor the ecocentric fear of violating divine nature). Rather it recognises nature as our fellow creature entrusted to our care by a loving God.

(d) Priesthood and consummation

If stewardship summarises humankind's ethical response to God the Creator, priesthood summarises our doxological response. As the stewards of creation we represent God to creation; as the priests of creation we represent creation to God. Our response to God is creation's response translated into words.

The idea that one of our tasks as Christians is to mediate the worship of creation to God is particularly clear in the life and ministry of St Francis of Assisi, e.g., in his Canticle of Brother Sun. In that hymn, Francis is not praising God for the creatures or directing his praise to

the creatures themselves. Modern translations render his use of the prepositions cun and per by 'through' used in the sense of instrumentality, e.g., "All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made" (Habig 1973, 130). The hymn recognises that God does, in fact, receive praise through all creatures. Following the lead of several Old Testament Psalms, he praises God by interpreting the praises of creation.

Praising God through the interpretation of creation is central to our vocation as the priests of creation. Our praise is the self-offering of creation to the Creator. This is particularly clear in much eastern orthodox liturgy. However, it is also applicable to art and scientific research.

How does this relate to the eschatological consummation of creation? The Christian vision of the eschaton is primarily one of boundless praise. The praises of God which we now sing are the historical anticipation of that unbounded song of creation.

NOTES

1. This approach presents God as being-itself (in Tillich's terminology, it is the ontological approach to theology). It results in the identification of creation, procession and generation. Thus it tends to subordinationism, reducing Christ to the ontological link between God and the world.
2. In Hellenistic thought, the idea of an infinite substance was self-contradictory. To apeiron (the unbounded) was, according to Anaximander, the void in

which the world came to be, and, according to Aristotle, God (Collingwood 1945, 33). Its sole characteristic was indeterminacy. Thus to speak of divine substance was to imply its finitude: that it must be constrained in some way.

The Christian doctrine of creatio ex nihilo had already ruled out any external constraint on the divine activity. For the Cappadocians, an orthodox reading of the Nicene Creed also ruled out any internal necessity on God. This was most easily expressed by their affirmation of the divine infinitude.

3. It would appear to follow from this equality of status that a form of address for one of the Persons is equally appropriate for the others. Thus when Jesus exhorts us to address God as Father (i.e., to enter into a personal relationship with the Father), a similar relationship is possible with the other Persons and a similar form of address (i.e., a fully personal form) is appropriate in their cases too. Contrast this with the Origenist insistence that prayer be addressed to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.
4. It should be stressed that ontological inseparability does not imply epistemological inseparability. The doctrine of perichoresis does not rule out a trinitarian analysis of the divine activity (Zizioulas 1985, 129). An analogy from contemporary philosophy would be the actual entities of process metaphysics: the entire process of prehension and concretion which constitutes an actual entity is ontologically fundamental, it may not be divided into constituent parts, and yet it is legitimate to speak of it as consisting of these elements.
5. A good example would be the regularity with which Florovsky refers to Augustine in his account of the Christian doctrine of creation (Florovsky 1949, 59; 1976, 43-78).
6. This use of Neoplatonic psychology is particularly damaging to the Cappadocian rejection of Neoplatonism since it appears in the context of the statement of a psychological analogy for the Trinity.
7. In view of such evidence it is hard to accept the argument that the Cappadocians' use of Neoplatonism was no more than the use of the accepted terminology for intellectual discourse at that period (Meredith 1982, 1120).
8. This says nothing about how events participate in the divine life. It certainly does not entail the adoption of universalism.
9. It is arguable that this lack of 'space' between God and the world is a consequence of the "relative failure to give the persons of the Godhead particularity and distinctness" (Gunton 1988, 17) apparent in my preceding points about his trinitarianism.
10. Their popularity stems from the belief that only by regarding it as part of the divine essence can we show proper respect for nature (e.g., Spretnak 1986, 53).

11. Gilkey sees this change in historical consciousness and its corresponding change in the concept of freedom as largely a product of the Enlightenment. However, it is possible to detect a tendency in this direction in late mediaeval theology, e.g., in the work of Gabriel Biel (Tanner 1988, 132-41).
12. A process which reached its logical conclusion in existentialism and process metaphysics.
13. Tanner 1988 argues that so long as theologians accommodate theology to modern methods of intellectual inquiry they will be unable to overcome this pervasive Pelagianism. She also seeks to demonstrate that traditional Christian discourse about divine and human activity is coherent within its own methodological framework (Tanner 1988, 81-119).
14. The triadic structure of concurrence (praecurrit, concurrit, succurrit) caused by our experience of temporality suggests the possibility of trinitarian formulation.
15. To be fair to Kaufman, his own interpretation of the master act is that it "is not an act performed once and for all at the beginning of the historical process, like winding up a clock and then letting it run; it is, rather, the continuous activity of a living agent, and it necessarily involves God's responding in particular and unique ways (in the light of his final objectives) to each new historical situation as it arises out of interaction with his creatures" (Kaufman 1978, 303).
16. Several distinguished philosophers and theologians of the past three centuries have succumbed to this temptation. Amongst these may be numbered Descartes, Malebranche, Berkeley, Edwards, and Leibniz (Quinn 1983, 56).
17. Process thought avoids the loss of creaturely freedom by transferring creativity from God to every actual entity. However, it too denies the persistence of the creature.
18. Preservation commonly connotes the maintenance of the status quo or the restoration of a former state. Conservation connotes maintenance with an end in view, but this is invariably seen in anthropocentric terms (Passmore 1980, 73).
19. The Exodus experience is a biblical paradigm of this creatio nova. God does a new thing which was humanly speaking quite unpredictable, indeed impossible and which gives rise to a wealth of new possibilities for creaturely being. And yet for all its novelty it stands in organic continuity with the sweep of created history (Jenson 1982b, 35).
20. I might have used 'convergence' but this could suggest a determinate end-state towards which God is manipulating all things.
21. This tendency is part of a broader neglect of pneumatology engendered by an Augustinian doctrine of the Trinity.
22. This is by no means an isolated reference. Approving

- references to a purely spiritual eschaton could have been multiplied many times over. See e.g., Mooney 1968, 196-98; Santmire 1985, 155-71, 254-57.
23. A possible physical metaphor would be that of sympathetic vibration and resonance. God has called creation into being; not an arbitrary chaos or a static cosmos but a world with the potential to respond to the divine call. Subsequently God has spoken his Word to creation with a view to evoking the appropriate response. The first stumbling responses are met with renewed divine address encouraging a stronger response and so on ad infinitum. The eschaton corresponds to the to-us-incomprehensible state of completely unbounded divine address and creaturely response: an infinite spiral of blessing and praise.
 24. With appropriate qualifications this may be symbolised as the divine embodiment in creation (e.g., Dorner 1882, 18; Moltmann 1985, 13-17).
 25. It is participation not communion. According to Zizioulas, the latter pertains only to the divine being (Zizioulas 1985, 94).
 26. There are only three direct references in the Old Testament (Gn. 1:26-27, 5:1-3, 9:5-6) and less than a dozen in the New Testament (mostly in the Pauline writings).
 27. Picking up the connotation of violence in bios, Zizioulas summarises this by speaking of biological man.
 28. It is a divine act in the sense that God precedes and accompanies it (making the human act possible), and finally brings it to fulfilment.

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